

# A NINETEENTH CENTURY SLANG DICTIONARY

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## PERIOD SLANG

Humbug? Shecoonery? Useless truck or gum? Hornswoggling? Honey-fuggling? Not in this book, dear sir! I swan to mercy, a huckle- berry above anyone's persimmon. Some pumpkins, a caution, 100 percent certified by a Philadelfy lawyer. If not, dad-blame it, I'll hang up my fiddle, and you can sass me, knock me into a cocked hat, give me jesse, fix my flint, settle my hash, ride me out on a rail and have a conniption fit, you cussed scalawag. Now ain't that the beatingest language you ever did hear? Sure beats the Dutch! Pshaw! Do tell! Bully for you!

This is just a small example of the period slang of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that you would hear during the Civil War. This will help you build your first person character if you learn some of the lingo of the time.

**WARNING:** We have also included period curse words and obscenities in here as well. While the Civil War soldier was not supposed to curse in front of officers or NCOs, he certainly used them, so we felt it was important to include these as well. These are located at the end of the regular slang dictionary under a separate heading.

Many of these slang terms were taken from a book entitled "*Writing for the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A Writers Guide for all things Victorian*". It is filled with wonderful information regarding slang terms and other wonderful details of 19<sup>th</sup> century life. We have also included, when we could, when the first recorded time this phrase was known to be used, as well as a brief definition of the word.

And so, dear reader, here be but a microcosm of America's nineteenth-century colloquialisms and slang, some from the upper class, some from the lower, and much from the strata in between.

## **NINETEENTH CENTURY SLANG**

**absquatulate:** to take leave, to disappear.

1843: A can of oysters was discovered in our office by a friend, and he absquatulated with it, and left us with our mouth watering. *Missouri Reporter, February 2*

1862: Rumor has it that a gay bachelor, who has figured in Chicago for nearly a year, has skedaddled, absquatulated, vamoosed, and cleared out. *Rocky Mountain News, Denver, May 10*

**accelerator:** a velocipede. (See also *Bicycling in Amusements*, p. 19 1.)

**acknowledge the corn:** to admit the truth; to confess; to acknowledge one's own obvious lie or shortcoming.

1840: David Johnson acknowledged the corn, and said that he was drunk. *Daily Pennant, St. Louis, July 14*

1846: I hope he will give up the argument, or, to use a familiar phrase, acknowledge the corn. *Mr. Speight, Mississippi, U.S. Senate, Congressional Globe, January 28*

1850: He has not confessed the corn, as the saying is, that he did preach disunion? *Mr. Staniy, North Carolina, House of Reps., congressional Globe*

**across lots:** to push on straight through despite obstacles.

1853: "Go to hell across lots." Brigham Young, journal of Discourses, *March 27*

1869: I came cross lots from Aunt Sawin's and I got caught in those pesky blackberry bushes in the graveyard. *Harriet Beecher Stowe, Old Town Folks*

**algerine:** a pirate.

1844: They have called the law for punishing treason an Algerine law; they have denominated us the Algerine party; and they have talked a great deal about Algerine cruelties. *Mr. Potter, Rhode Island, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, March 12*

**all creation, all nature, all wrath:** everything or everybody.

1819: Father and I have just returned from the balloon-all nature was there, and more too. *Mass. Spy, November 3*

1833: I could eat like all wrath ... I'll be down on him like all wrath anyhow. *J.K. Paulding, Banks of the Ohio*

1839: He pulls like all creation, as the woman remarked when the horse ran away with her. *Yale Literary Magazine*

**all-fired:** hell-fired.

1835: His boss gin him a most all-fired cut with a horsewhip. *Boston Pearl, November 28*

1852: In my opinion, Dan Baxter would make an all-fired good deacon. Knickerbocker Magazine, August

1866: O Sall, did you ever see such an all-fired sight of shoes? *Seba Smith, Way Down East, p.289*

1872: You were too all-fired lazy to get a stick of wood. *J.M. Bailey, Folks in Danbury, p.80*

**all on one stick:** a conglomeration or combination.

1830: He kept a kind of hotel and grocery store, all on one stick, as we say. *N. Dana, A Mariner's Sketches, p.18*

**all-overish:** uncomfortable.

1855: I grew - all-overish - no other phrase expresses it. Putnam's Magazine, December

**allow:** to admit; to be of the opinion.

1840: She said she would allow he was the most beautiful complected child she had ever seen. Knickerbocker Magazine

1866: Where is Hamlin? I allow that he is dead, or I would ask him too. *C.H. Smith, Bill Arp, p.23*

**all possessed, like:** like someone or something possessed by the devil.

1857: He'd carry on like all possessed -dance and sing, and tell stories, jest as limber and lively as if he'd never hefted a timber. Putnam's Magazine, January

1878: She dropped a pan o' hot oysters into the lap of a customer and set him to swearin' and dancin' like all possessed. *J.H. Beadle, Western Wilds, p.184*

**all to Pieces:** completely; absolutely.

1839: "I know him all to pieces," replied the gentleman. *Charles Biggs, Harry Franco*

1847: I knew him all to pieces as soon as I caught sight of him. *Charles Briggs, Tom Pepper*

**almighty:** huge.

1848- I felt almighty blue. Stray Subjects, p.109

**amalgamation:** the mixing of blacks and whites.

1839: The Senator further makes the broad charge that Abolitionists wish to enforce the unnatural system of amalgamation. We deny the fact. *Mr. Morris, Ohio, U.S. Senate, Congressional Globe*

1847: Amalgamation, even by marriage, is not at all dreaded [in Texas]. Parties of white and coloured persons not unfrequently come over from Louisiana. *Life of Benjamin Lundy, p. II 7*

**anti-fogmatic:** raw rum or whiskey.

1829: The takers of anti-fogmatics, juleps, or other combustibles. *Savannah Mercury, July 1*

1852: Tom Nettles [was] mixing a couple of rosy anti-fogmatics. *As Good as a Comedy, p.134*

1855: A thirsty throat, to which anything like delay in an anti-fogmatic is almost certain bronchitis. *W.G Simms, Border Beagles, p.55*

**Arkansas toothpick:** a long knife. Also known as a California or Missouri toothpick.

1855: We mistrust that the author of that statement saw a Missouri toothpick, and was frightened out of his wits. *Herald of Freedom, Lawrence, Kansas, June 9*

1869: A brace of faithful pistols in his belt, and a huge Arkansas tooth- pick, or bowie knife, in a leather sheath. *A.K. McClure, Rocky Mountains, p.377*

**backing and filling:** Literally, the alternate movements of a steamboat. Metaphorically, changing one's mind; waffling.

1848: The steam was well up on both boats, which lay rolling, and back-ing and filling, from the action of the paddles, at the dock. *Stray Subject p. 1 74*

1854: Men will be sent to Congress who will not back and fill, and be on one principle for one week, one month, and one moon, and upon another principle another week, and month, and moon. *Mr. Stephens, Georgia, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, December II*

**bad egg:** a bad person; a good-for-nothing person.

1864: A bad egg-a fellow who had not proved to be as good as his promise. *The Atheneum, p.559*

**balderdash:** nonsense; foolishness; empty babble.

**bar, barr:** the popular pronunciation and spelling of bear, as used prolifically in the South.

1843: They say you've no barr nor turkey out thare in Filledelfy? R. Carlton, *The New Purchase*

1847: All the marks left behind showed me that he was the bar. *T.B. Thorpe, The Big Bear of Arkansas, p.25*

**beans, don't know, don't care:** anything; something; nothing.

1857: "Well, then," said the General, "I don't care beans for the railroad, not a single old red-eyed bean, not a string-bean." *Knickerbocker Magazine, February*

**beat the Dutch:** to beat all or beat the devil.

1840: Of all the goings on that I ever did hear of, this beats the Dutch. *Knickerbocker Magazine, February*

1854: Well, it does beat the Dutch, and the Dutch, you know, beat the d --- 1. *Knickerbocker Magazine, May*

**beatingest, beatemest, beatenest:** anything or anyone that beats the competition.

1874: I reckon I am the beatin'est man to ax questions in this neck of timber. *Edward Eggleston, The Circuit Rider, P. 119*

**bee:** a gathering of friends, family and neighbors to carry out a specific, time consuming job, e.g., a cornhusking or quilting bee.

1829: This collection of neighbors is called a Bee, and is the common custom to assist each other in any great piece of labor, such as building a house, logging, etc. The person who calls the bee is expected to feed them well, and to return their work day for day. *Basil Hall, Travels in North America, pp.311-312*

**b'hoy:** a rowdy young man; reveler; ruffian. See also G'hal.

1847: [He] had lived too long in the wire grass region to misunderstand the character of that peculiar class of b'hoys who dwell there. *Knickerbocker Magazine, March*

1852: [The occupants of the sleigh] are of not-to-be-mistaken Bowery cut - veritable b'hoys. *Charles A. Bristed, The Upper Ten Thousand, p.29*

1853: My off-handed manner just suited the b'hoy, on whom any superfluous politeness would have been thrown away. *Knickerbocker Magazine, July*

**bidly:** a hen.

1874: [The English hens] had a contented cluck, as if they never got nervous, like Yankee biddies. *Louisa May Alcott, Little Wives*

**big bugs:** bigwigs; important people.

1853: Who is that walking there with the big bugs in front? he eagerly asked. Why, don't you know? That is the Governor. *Daily Morning Herald, St. Louis, May 10*

1856: Hiram was beloved by many of the big bugs at Washington. *Knickerbocker Magazine, March*

1856: She's one of the big bugs here -that is, she's got more money than almost anybody else in town. *Widow Bedott Papers, No.25*

**biggest toad in the puddle:** the most important person in a group.

**bodaciously:** an exaggeration of "bodily."

1833: It's a mercy that the cowardly varmints hadn't used you up bodaciously. *James Hall, Legends of the West, p.38*

1878: I saw a man in Stockton, California, who had been bodaciously chawed up to use his own language, by a grizzly bear. *J.H. Beadle, Western Wilds, p.118*

**body:** a person.

1798: This hot weather makes a body feel odd. How long would a body be going to Washington? *Davis, Travels in America, p.223*

**boodle:** a crowd of people.

1833: He declared he'd fight the whole boodle of 'em. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p. 183*

**border ruffians:** those living outside the civilized settlements.

1857: A great majority of the people of the West, on the borders, may be emphatically termed Border ruffians. The Eastern people call them by that name. *John Taylor at the Bowery, Salt Lake City, August 9*

1860: I only wanted to convince gentlemen . . . that Indianians made better border ruffians than we did. *Mr. Craig, Missouri, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, January 4*

**born days, in all one's:** In all one's: lifetime; since one was born.

1840s: Where have you been all your born days, not to know better than that? Sam Slick in England, *ch.ii*

**[not] born In the woods to be scared by an owl:** refers to one who is experienced and therefore unafraid.

**brick in one's hat, to have:** to be drunk.

1854: A seedy-looking old negro, with a brick in his old hat, and a weed 'round it. *Knickerbocker Magazine, August*

**bub and sis:** brother and sister, especially applied to children.

1872: Many eminently genteel persons, whose manners make them at home anywhere, are in the habit of addressing all unknown children by one of the two terms, bub and sis, which they consider endears them greatly to the young people. *Poet at the Breakfast Table, ch.i*

**bucket shop:** a gin mill; a distillery.

1881: A bucket-shop in New York is a low gin-mill or distillery, where small quantities of spirits are dispensed in pitchers and pails [buck- ets]. When the shops for dealing in one-share or five-share lots of stocks were opened, these dispensaries of smaller lots then could be got from regular dealers and were at once named bucket-shops. *NY Evening Post, October*

**buckskin:** a Virginian.

1824: We suspect that Capt. Tribby Clapp doodled the Buckskins. *Franklin Herald, April 13*

**bully for you!:** well done; good for you.

1861: Bully for you! alternated with benedictions, in the proportion of two bullies to one blessing. *Atlantic Monthly, June, p. 745*

1864: The freckles have vanished, and bully for you. *Daily Telegraph, November 18*

**bummer:** the original word for bum. A lazy hobo or drunk.

1857: The irreclaimable town bummer figured in the police court. *San Francisco Call, April 28*

1860: Another great sham connected with our social life is that of spreeing **or** bumming. *Yale Literary Magazine*

1862: A great majority of the bummers, who so long infested this city, have either left or gone to work. *Rocky Mountain News, Denver, May 10*

**bunkum:** claptrap.

1827: This is an old and common saying at Washington, when a member of Congress is making one of those hum-drum and unlistened-to long talks which have lately become so fashionable.... This is cantly called talking to Bunkum: an honorable gentleman, long ago, having said that he was not speaking to the house, but to the people of a certain county [Buncombe] in his district, which, in local phrase, he called Bunkum. *Niles' Weekly Register, September 27*

1843: Mr. Weller of Ohio thought the question had been sufficiently debated, for nearly all the speeches had been made for Buncombe. *Mr. Underwood, Kentucky, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, December II, p.43*

**candle-lighting:** dusk.

1810: From dinner to dark I give to Society; and from candle-light to early bed-time I read. *Thomas Jefferson, from Monticello, February 26*

1824: The Rev. Mr. Kidwell, a Unitarian Universalist, will preach at the courthouse at early candle light on Sunday evening. *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette, March 26*

1853: The dancing commenced at early candle-lighting, and continued until long after midnight. *Turnover, A Tale of New Hampshire, p.80*

1888: The meeting was appointed for early candle-lighting. *American Humorist, August*

**cap the climax:** to beat all; to surpass everything.

1804: Your correspondent caps the climax of Misrepresentation. *Lancaster Intelligencer, February 21*

1811: It caps the climax of French arrogance and turpitude. *Massachusetts Spy, September 18*

1821: To cap the climax of his infamy and barbarity, he severed the head from the body of the infant. *Pennsylvania Intelligencer, March 21*

1860: All that was wanting to cap the climax to this absurd (Lincoln) nomination was the selection of Hannibal Hamlin as a candidate for Vice-Presidency. *Richmond Enquirer, May 25, pp.4-5*

**carryings-on:** frolicking, partying, etc.

1840s: Everybody tuck Christmas, especially the niggers, and sich carry- ins-on-sich dancin' and singin'-and shootin' poppers and sky- rackets -you never did see. *Major Jones's Courtship*

**catawamptiously chewed up:** utterly defeated, badly beaten. An expression largely confined to the South and West, from at least the 1840s on.

**catch a weasel asleep, to:** referring to something impossible or unlikely, in regard to someone who is always alert and is seldom or never caught off guard, e.g., You can't trick old Joe any sooner than you can catch a weasel asleep.

**caution, a:** a warning. Also a ludicrous example, or someone or some- thing striking.

1839: Off we hied to the prairie, and the way the feathers flew was a caution. *John Plumbe, Sketches in Iowa, p.56*

1840: The way Mrs. N. rolls up her eyes when the English are mentioned is certainly a caution. *Mrs. Kirkland, A New Home, p. 259*

1851: The way he squalled, rolled, kicked, puked, snorted, and sailed into the air, was a caution to old women on three legs. *An Arkansas Doctor, p.151*

**cavort:** to frolic or prance about.

1834: Government's bought their land, and it's wrong for them to be cavorting around quiet people's houses any more. *C.F. Hoffman, A Winter in the Far West, p.28*

1845: She better not come a cavortin 'bout me with any of her carryins on. *W. T. Thompson, Chronicles of Pineville, p. 1 78*

**chance:** a quantity.

1819: A considerable quantity is expressed by a smart chance; and our hostess at Madison said there was a smart chance of Yankees in that village. *David Thomas, Travels, p.230*

1833: "There's a smart chance of cigars there in the bar, stranger, if you'd try some of them," said one of the hooshiers. *C.F. Hoffman, A Winter in the Far West, p.219*

1833: There was a right smart chance of sickness when she came to the settlement. *James Hall, Legends of the West p.88*

**chirk:** cheerful. Synonyms: chirp, chirpy.

1843: She is not very chirk, but more chirkier than she had been; and all our folks appear more chirkier than they really feel, in order to chirk her up. *Yale Literary Magazine, p.26*

1857: Chirk and lively we both were. *Knickerbocker Magazine, janua7y 1878: 1 didn't feel real cherk this week, so't I didn't go to sewin' s'ciety. Rose T. Cooke, Happy Dodd*

1878: Ef there's a mortal thing I can do to help ye, or chirk ye up, I want to do it right off. *Rose T. Cooke, Happy Dodd*

**circumstance:** anything to speak of.

1836: [The new hotel] will be a smasher, to which the Astor House will be no circumstance. *Philadelphia Public Ledger, November 16*

1854: You'd better think of all the pretty girls you ever seed, all at once, and then it won't be a circumstance. *Elvira takes the rag off everything there's about these parts. Knickerbocker Magazine, December*

1856: To be beaten by a mere circumstance of a gal-child. *W.G. Simms, Eutaw, p.394*

1857: I've travelled on the cars in my day, but that kind of going wasn't a circumstance to the way we tore along. *S.H. Hammond, Wild Northern Scenes, p.62*

**cocked hat:** To knock someone senseless or to shock him completely. To knock into a cocked hat.

1833: I told Tom I'd knock him into a cocked hat if he said another word. *J.K. Paulding, Banks of the Ohio, p.217*

1840: Why pummel and beat over again that which is already beaten to a jelly, jammed into a cocked hat, and flung into the middle of next week? *Mr. Wick, Indiana, House of Reprs., Congressional Globe, July 20, p.545*

1848: It has completely knocked us into a cocked hat. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p.306*

1852: We will knock [the groggeries] into a cocked hat. *Ezra T. Benson, at the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, journal of Discourses, September 12*

**Cockneyisms:** speaking in a Cockney dialect or pronouncing words with a Cockney accent, a popular speech affectation in Philadelphia from the beginning of the century to 1860. Some of the Cockneyisms were influenced by the writings of Charles Dickens.

1800: [In Philadelphia, Noah Webster) will find the London Cockneyisms flourish in perfection - veal - here converted into "weal," - and wine into "vine," -the hot-water-war he will find described as a "hot vater var," etc. *Aurora*, June 20

1830: It is almost impossible to distinguish Americans from English, especially Philadelphians, who like Cockneys talk about "wery good weal and winegar." *N. Dana*, *A Mariner's Sketches*, p.16

**codfish aristocracy:** a contemptuous term for people who have made money in business.

1850: We should regard it as somewhat strange if we should require a codfish aristocracy to keep us in order. *Mr. Butler*, *South Carolina, U.S. Senate*, *Congressional Globe*, July 9, p. 1248

1853: D. is evidently a retainer of the codfish aristocracy, who will only go where the price will match with his dignity. *Daily Morning Herald*, *St. Louis*, April 22

1860: The defender of genius against vulgar money bags, alias codfish aristocracy. *Richmond Enquirer*, May 15

**cold as a wagon tire:** dead.

1833: If a man was as cold as a wagon tire, provided there was any life in him, she'd bring him to. *James Hall*, *Legends of the West* p.88

**coloured person, person of color:** a Negro.

1812: Christopher Macpherson is a man of color, brought up as bookkeeper by a merchant, his master, and afterwards enfranchised. *Thomas Jefferson to John Adams*, April 20

**conniption fit:** a fit of hysteria.

1833: Ant Keziah fell down in a conniption fit. *Seba Smith*, *Major Jack Downing*, p.218

1842: The Vermont papers are going into conniption fits, because their state is in debt \$150,000. *Philadelphia Spirit of the Times*, August 23

1859: She went into a conniption at the sight of the poor Snap. *Harper's Weekly*, November 19

**considerable:** no small specimen.

1816: He is considerable of a surveyor. *Pickering*, *Vocabulary*

1843: Wall You're considerable of a critur, you are, by thunder! You eternal, great, green-eyed, black-devil! *Yale Literary Magazine*

1852: He is really. worth knowing, and considerable of a man, as we say- no fool at all. *Charks A. Bristed*, *The Upper Ten Thousand*, p.142

**Continental:** the money issued by Congress during the Revolutionary War. It eventually became synonymous with anything worthless.

1874: I tole him as how I didn't keer three continental derns fer his whole band. *Edward Eggleston*, *The Circuit Rider*, p.120

1888: 1 am not worrying about the nomination. I don't care a Continental if I don't receive it. *Missouri Republican*, February 16

**coon's age:** a long time.

1845: We won't hear the end of this bisness for a coon's age. You see if we do. *W. T. Thompson*, *Chronicles of Pineville*, p.72

1848: 1 never did like this Yanky way of married people livin' all over creation without seein' one another more'n once in a coon's age. *W.E. Burton*, *Waggeries*, p.16

1851: This child hain't had that much money in a coon's age. *Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs*, p.155

**coot:** an idiot; a simpleton; a ninny.

1856: He's an amazin' ignorant old coot, tew. *Widow Bedott Papers*, No.9

1857: It is a poor coot, let me tell you, that will make such excuses. *H.C. Kimball*, *Salt Lake City*, journal of Discourses, September 20, v, p.251

**corned:** drunk.

1840: William McG. brought a load of corn to market, and got corned on the strength of it. Daily Pennant *St. Louis, May 27*

**cotton to:** to take a liking to, a popular expression throughout the South and West from early in the century on.

**cow-hide, cow-skin:** a whip made of cowhide. Also used as a verb, to whip or flog.

1801: Dinah was armed with a cow-skin, while Cloe had nothing but the simple weapons of nature. Massachusetts Spy, *June 24*

1818: The enraged barrister, with a hand-whip, or cow-hide as they are called ... actually cut his jacket to ribbons. *M. Birbeck, Letters from Illinois, p.60*

1855: His lady had cow-hided him in the streets of his native city. *Thomas B. Gunn, New York Boarding Houses, p.21-5*

**cracker:** a poor white of the South, named after the crackling whips used by rural Southerners.

1842: We saw many of the country people coming into town; some on horseback, some in waggons, and some on foot... Single-breasted coats without collars, broad-brimmed and low-crowned hats, and gray hair floating in loose locks over their shoulders, were among their percularities .... They are called by the townspeople, Crackers, from the frequency with which they crack their whips. *J.S. Buckingham, Slave States, p.210*

1847: I met one of the country crackers, as the backwoodsmen are called, who, having been to Wetempka with a load of shingles, was on his way home. *Knickerbocker Magazine, May*

**crazy as a loon:** very crazy.

1854: The old man'll run as crazy as a loon a-thinkin' 'bout his house- hold affairs. *H.H. Riley, Puddleford, p.140*

**critter:** creature; varmint; a contemptible person.

1833: It would be ridiculous if it should be a bar; them critters sometimes come in here, and I have nothing but my knife. *Knickerbocker Magazine, p.90*

1836: My little critter [a mustang], who was both blood and bottom, seemed delighted. *Colonel Crockett in Texas, p. 149*

1836: The old critter says he is married, and makes his wife work in the printing office. *Philadelphia Public Ledger, September 24*

1842: One of the clerks in the Baltimore Post Office, on opening a bag of letters, discovered a live garter-snake in the same. The critter bore no postmark or frank. *Philadelphia Spirit of the Times, July 28*

**dang:** euphemism for damn, e.g., dang it all or dang you.

**dash!:** euphemism for damn, e.g., dash it all.

**dashing:** showy, elegant or spirited, especially in dress.

**dead meat:** a corpse, from 1860 on.

**death on:** very fond of or very talented at.

1847: A long, lanky, cadaverous lawyer, who was death on a speech, powerful in chewing tobacco, and some at a whisky drinking. *Robb, Streaks of Squatter Life, p.30*

**deef:** deaf

1896: You're a-goin' to do what? I reckon I'm a-goin' a little deef. *Ella Higgimon, Tales from Puget Sound, p.68*

**designs:** plans; schemes; intentions. Commonly used throughout.

1846: I like gentlemen's society when I know they have no designs upon my heart and when I know any cordiality of mine will not be misinterpreted. *Mary Butterfield, letter to fiancé, October 31*

**didoes:** to cut up didoes was to get into mischief.

1835: Must all the world know all the didoes we cut up in the lodgeroom? *D.P. Thompson, Adventures of Timothy Peacock, p. 170*

1838: If you keep a cutting didoes, I must talk to you like a Dutch uncle. *J.C. Neal, Charcoal Sketches, p.201*

**diggings:** one's home; lodgings; community.

1838: It's about time we should go to our diggings. *J.C. Neal, Charcoal Sketches, p.119*

1842: With whom did the idea originate? It's novel in these diggings at least. *Philadelphia Spirit of the Times, May 6*

1853: How dare you talk thus in these days, and above all in these diggings. Fun and Earnest, *p.239*

**dipping:** chewing snuff.

1853: This horrible practice, called in lower Virginia and North Carolina dipping, is of respectable standing.

Putnam's Magazine, *February, p.142*

1857: She was suspected of a mysterious habit denominated in Southern parlance dipping-in other words, of chewing snuff. *Thomas B. Gunn, New York Boarding Houses, p.221*

**dirk:** to stab with a dirk or dagger.

1825: He had changed his mind as to the dirking... [He] swore the fellow ought to be dirked, the usual phrase for the punishment of slight offences among these humane republicans. *J.K. Paulding, John Bull in America, pp.39,146*

1830: The assassin determined to dirk him in the street on his return. *Massachusetts Spy, June 2*

**doggery:** a cheap drinking establishment; in modern lingo, a dive.

1848: The drunkard, while reeling homeward from the doggery, is attracted by both sides of the street, which accounts for his diagonal movements. *Dow, Patent Sermons, p.99*

1850.- A doggery is too contemptible for any man who has a soul more elevated than the swine to condescend to. *Frontier Guardian, March 20*

1854: And then the doggery-keepers got to sellin' licker by the drink, instead of the half-pint, and a dime a drink at that. *J.G. Baldwin, Flush Times in Alabama, p.65*

1855: Some say that this fellow-feeling between him and the marshal results from the fact that he was a doggery-keeper in the states. *Weekly Oregonian, April 7*

**doings:** "fixins" for a meal.

1843: A snug breakfast of chicken fixins, eggs, ham-doins, and even slapjacks. *R. Carlton, The New Purchase, p.58*

1847: Flour doins an' chicken fixins, an' four uncommon fattest big gobblers roasted I ever seed. *Billy Warwick's Wedding, p.104*

1859: Tell Sal to knock over a chicken or two, and get out some flour, and have some flour-doins and chicken fixins for the stranger. *Knickerbocker Magazine, March*

**done gone:** a pleonasm (redundancy) used frequently by Negroes of the period.

1836: He had done gone three hours ago. *"A Quarter Race in Kentucky, "New York Spirit of the Times, p.22*

**do tell:** phrase used to express fascination with a speaker's subject. 1842: Among the peculiar expressions in use in Maine we noticed that, when a person has communicated some intelligence in which the hearer feels an interest, he manifests it by saying: "I want to know"; and when he has concluded his narrative, the hearer will reply: "O! do tell!" *J.S. Buckingham, Eastern and Western States, p. 177*

1853: Do tell! I want to know! Did you ever! Such a powerful right smart chance of learning as you have is enough to split your head open right smack. *Daily Morning Herald, St. Louis, April 11*

1853: At last sez I, "Jidge, did you ever have your portrait tuck?" "No," sez he, as ugly as you please. "Dew te," says I. *Knickerbocker Magazine, September*

**dram shop:** a small drinking establishment, from early in century.

**dude:** a dandy.

1883: The new coined word dude ... has travelled over the country with a great deal of rapidity since but two months ago it grew into general use in New York. *North Adams Transcript, June 24*

1888: If the term dude had been invented [in 1866] it would have been applied to a Texas horseman. *Mrs. Elizabeth Custer, Tenting on the Plains, p.212*

1891: Joe then went east, and married a young dudine out there. *A. Welcker, Woolly West p.69*

**elephant, to see the:** to see it all, to experience it all. Sometimes pertaining to war, to see battle.

1840: That's sufficient, as Tom Haynes said when he saw the elephant. *A.B. Longstreet, Georgia Scenes, p.10*

1851: I think I have seen the elephant, as far as public life is concerned. *Mr. Hale, New Hampshire, U.S. Senate, Congressional Globe, January 22, p.304*

1854: I am a miner, who wandered away from down-east, and came to sojourn in a strange land, and see the elephant. *Knickerbocker Magazine, April*

1873: He had lost all his money, consisting of seven twenty-dollar gold pieces, and a bundle containing a valuable steam gauge. He had seen the elephant (rather too close a view, he thought), was many hundred miles from home, among strangers, and without a dollar in his pocket. *Edward Savage, Police Records and Recollections, p.121*

**exfluncticate:** to utterly destroy.

1839: The mongrel armies are prostrate-used up-exfluncticated. *Chemung (New York) Democrat November 30*

1840: ...the Administration is bodaciously used up, tetotaciously ex- flunctified. *Mr. Wick, Indiana, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, July 20, p.545*

**express:** the mails; a mail stage.

1851: The religious papers which have the greatest circulation are pa- pers of a small size, and are transmitted mostly by express. *Mr. Dunean, Massachwetts, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, January 15, p.245*

1854: There are two large express companies, Adams & Co. and Wells, Fargo & Co., which carry mail matter by Nicaragua, charging from twenty-five to fifty cents on a letter. *Mr. Lathan, California, Congressional Globe, April 7, p.872*

**F.F.V.:** First Families of Virginia, of which many claimed to be members to gain special treatment, but eventually used in jest.

1850: [He was] the first of his race to acknowledge that he was not an F.F.V. *Odd Leaves, p. 178*

1857: Mr. Floyd, as everybody knows, as an F.F.V., and the soul of honor accordingly. *Harper's Weekly, April 11*

1861: They must do better down in Virginia than they have done, or EF.V., instead of standing for First Families of Virginia, will get to mean the Fast Flying Virginians. *Oregon Argus, August 10*

**fice, fiste, tyst:** a worthless dog; a mongrel.

1843: Did you ever see a pack composed of five or six little fice dogs, barking furiously? *Missouri Reporter, St. Louis, June 29*

1863: What other Pete can I mean but your dirty little fice dog? *J.B. Jones, Wild Western Scenes, p. 15*

1874: [The barking ranged] all the way from the contemptible treble of an ill-mannered fice to the deep baying of a huge bulldog. *Edward Eggleston, The Circuit Rider, p. 72*

1890: All the dogs of the regiment were with us, apparently, from the lofty and high-born staghounds down to the little feist, or mongrel, of the trooper. *Mrs. Elizabeth Custer, Following the Guidon, p.78*

**fist, make a:** to succeed at something.

1834: A chap would make a blue fist of takin'a dead aim through double sights, with the butt end of a psalm in his guzzle. *The Kentuckian in New York, p.25*

1838: He reckoned he should make a better fist at farming than edicating. *Caroline Gilman, Recollections of a Southern Matron, p.46*

1841: You made a poor fist of this business. *W.G. Simms, The Kinsmen, p.24*

**fit:** popular slang for fought.

1835: Any body can get in, if only he fit big battles enough. I'd give a year's sellary in a minute, if Mr. Van Buren had ever fit a great battle so as to be called a hero. *Bucks County Intelligencer, November 4*

1839: Here's a going to be one of the peskiest battles that ever was fit. *Chemung (New York) Democrat, April 17*

1845: There's a mighty chance of lawyers' lies in the papers ... but some of it is true. I did strike the old lady, but she fit me powerfully first. *Cornelius Mathews, A Court Scene in Georgia, p.140*

1869: He hadn't fit the Arminians and Socinians to be beat by a tom- turkey. *Harriet Beecher Stowe, Old Town Stories*

**fix:** a dilemma; a problem; a jam.

1833: When a man has head religion, he is in a bad fix to die -cut off his head, and away goes his body and soul to the devil. *James Hall, Legends of the West, p.43*

1839: The Americans are never at a loss when they are in a fix. *Marryat, Diary in America, p. 106*

**fixings:** trimmings, accessories, etc.

1825: The veteran trapper was furnished with such other appliances, or fixens, as he would term them, as put him in plight again to take the field. *New Hampshire Patriot, Concord, May 23*

1842: Our friends who love oysters and sparkling rosy wine, and other little fixens in the eating way, will do well to drop in at the Bath House Refectory. *Philadelphia Spirit of the Times, January 22*

1842: People can't afford to purchase the rich golden and rosy beef- steaks, as formerly. They keep soul and body together with greens and onions, shad, and such like fixins. *Philadelphia Spirit of the Times, April 16*

1845: Our ladies are sadly in want of the little fixins made by the milliners. *Letter to the Bangor Mercury*

1848: [He] makes a heap of money by selling Yankee made Ingin fixins, sich as moccasins, bead-bags, card-cases, and a heap of fancy articles, sich as the Ingins themselves never dreamed of makin. *Major Jones's Sketches of Travel p. 167*

**fix one's flint:** to settle a matter.

1837: I thought I had fiked your flint yesterday. *Knickerbocker Magazine, April*

1843: "Take it easy, Sam," says I, "Your flint is fixed." *Sam Slick in England*

1847: Stranger, if you don't shet your mouth a little closer than a Gulf clam, I'll fix your flint in short order. *J.K. Paulding, American Comedies, p.197*

**fleshy:** fat.

1807: A large, fleshy, rugged, strong, active child. *Massachusetts Spy, August 26*

1840: Mrs. Ferret is what we call a fleshy or lusty woman; she weighed two hundred and twelve, in Neal Hopper's new scale at the mill. *John P. Kennedy, Quodlibet, p.110*

**frolic:** a celebration; a party; a wild time. Also, a fight.

1815: He happened to get both eyes gouged out yesterday in a frolic. *J.K. Paulding, John Bull in America, p.218*

1833: They meant to have a reaping frolic when the corn should be ripe. *Harriet Martineau, Briery Creek, p. 18*

**full chisel:** at full speed; executed with everything you've got.

1832: I met an express coming on full chisel from Philadelphia. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p. 168*

1878: The only way to get that fellow to heaven would be to set out to drive him to hell; then he'd turn and run up the narrow way full chisel. *Harriet Beecher Stowe, Poganuc People*

**funeral, not one's:** not one's business; none of one's concern.

1875: Wanted: A nice, plump, healthy, good-natured, good-looking domestic and affectionate lady to correspond with, object -Matrimony. She must be between 22 and 35 years of age. She must be a believer in God and immortality, but no sectarian. She must not be a gad about or given to scandal.... Such a lady can find a correspondent by addressing ... Post Office Box 9, Yuma, A.T. Photographs exchanged! If anybody don't like our way of going about this ... business, we don't care. It's none of their funeral. *Lonely hearts classified ad in the Arizona Sentinel, July 10*

1896: It ain't any of your funeral, I guess, if I did turn (the clock] back. *Ella Higginson, Tales from Puget Sound, p.184*

**gallnipper:** a large mosquito.

1842: The gallnippers of Florida are said to have aided the Seminoles in appalling our armies. *Mrs. Kirkland, Forest Life, p.184*

1888: Our rainwater was full of gallnippers and pollywogs ... banks of mud all bred mosquitoes, or gallnippers, as the darkies call them. *Mrs. Elizabeth Custer, Tenting on the Plains, pp. 76-77*

**g'hal:** a rowdy girl; a reveler or ruffian girl. See also B'hoy.

1848: Go it, all ye g'hals, and ye b'hoys, as much as you can, while you are young. *Dow, Patent Sermons, P.167*

**gone coon, gone sucker:** a goner.

1840: I was afeared you were a gone coon. *C.F. Hoffman, Greyslaer, p.221*

1845: The acquisition of Canada ... is put down on all sides as a gone coon. *Mr. Giddings, Ohio, in Congress*

185 1: I feared that I should lose my way, and then I knew I was a gone sucker. *An Arkansaw Doctor, p.109*

**Gotham:** New York City.

1836: An Albany or Newark dog is well worth fifty cents, if brought to Gotham's authorities, as if actually killed in Gotham's streets.... We understand that a dog's flesh is quite a luxury in Gotham market. *Philadelphia Public Ledger,*

August 5

1840: Col. Johnson was in New York, drinking juleps at Delmonicos. He was warmly received by Gothamites. Daily Pennant *St. Louis, July 22*

**go the whole hog:** to go all the way.

1830. As ladies now wear pantaloons and boots, I see no reason why they should not go the whole hog and mount the hat and swallow tail coat likewise. *N. Dana, A Mariner's Sketches, p.186*

1833: T. Hamilton quotes a placard, "Jackson for ever. Go the whole hog" The expression, I am told, is of Virginian origin. In that state, when a butcher kills a pig, it is usual to demand of each customer, whether he will go the whole hog. *Men and Manners in America, pp. 17-18*

**gouge:** to gouge at your opponent's eyes in a fight, a widely referred to tactic throughout the century.

1820: In most cases both parties were severely bruised, bitten, and gouged, and would be weeks in recovering. *Peter Burnett, Recollections, p. 19*

1826: ... I saw more than one man who wanted an eye, and ascertained that I was now in the region [on the Mississippi] of gouging. *T. Flint, Recollections, p.98*

1830: "Gouge him! Gouge him!" exclaimed a dozen voices. *George Prentice, Northern Watchman, Troy, New York*

1843: Rowdy Bill was famous as a gouger, and so expert was he in his anti-optical vocation, that in a few minutes he usually bored out his adversary's eyes, or made him cry "peccavi." *R. Carlton, The New Purchase, p.158*

**greased lightning:** anything very fast.

1833: He spoke as quick as greased lightning. *Boston Herald, January 15*

1837: If I didn't fetch old dug-out through slicker than snakes, and faster than a greased thunderbolt. *R.M. Bird, Nick of the Woods, p.90*

1842: The horse went up the street like a blue streak of greased lightning. *Philadelphia Spirit of the Times, September 7*

**grist:** a quantity.

1833: There has been a mighty grist of rain lately up above. *J.K. Paulding, Banks of the Ohio, p.133*

1847: He owes old Sambo a whull grist of fourpences for blackin' his boots, runnin' of ar'nds, and sich like small chores. *J.K. Paulding, American Comedies, p.142*

1853: That old Greke that folks tell so much about never poured out sich a grist of oratory in all his born days. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p.411*

**grit:** guts; courage; toughness.

1834: Mother says before I was a week old I showed that I was real grit. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p.25*

1855: They are full of grit, and ready to swallow Cuba alive. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p.434*

**grocery:** a drinking establishment. See also Doggery, Dram shop, Groggery.

1830: Wilson told the Sheriff to take the jury to a grocery, that he might treat them, and invited every body that chose to go. Some men who have held a good standing in society followed the crowd to the gro- cery. *Jeffersonian, June 30*

1857: Some will set up a small grocery or groggery; they go into debt to those who have a bigger groggery. *John Taylor at the Bowery, Salt Lake City, Journal of Discourses, August 9, v, p.119*

**groggery, grog Shop:** a low drinking establishment; a dive.

1835: Long lines of unpainted, wretched looking dwellings, occupied as groggeries. *Ingraham, The South West P. 190*

1843: To enlarge the Congressional districts ... would break the power of mere shake-hands and grog-shop influence. *Mr. Underwood, Kentucky, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, April 21*

**grum:** surly; gloomy; glum.

1834: The poet looked gloomily, or what is vernacularly called grum. *Robert Sands, Writings, P.187*

1842: The sun seems extraordinarily sulky and grum. *Philadelphia Spirit of the Times, June 18*

**gum:** lies; exaggerations. As a verb, to dupe someone.

1843: Now this was all gum; Sam could not read a word. *R. Carlton, The New Purchase, p.255*

1844: He was speaking of the moon hoax, which gummed so many learned philosophers. *Yale Literary Magazine*, *xiv*, p.189

**guttersnipe:** a homeless child who roamed and slept in the streets. Hundreds roamed the larger cities throughout much of the century.

1890: Guttersnipe is the name which has been given to the more weakly street arab, the little fellow who, though scarcely more than a baby, is frequently left by brutalized parents at the mercy of any fate. This little chap generally roams around until he finds some courageous street arab, scarcely bigger than himself, perhaps, to fight his battles and put him in the way of making a living, which is generally done by selling papers. In time the guttersnipe becomes himself a full-fledged street arab ... with two hard and ready fists, and a horde of dependent and grateful snipes. *Darkness and Daylight in New York*, p. 116

**hang up one's fiddle:** to give up.

**hankering:** a strong desire, used throughout the century.

1847: I took an awful hankerin after Sofy M -, and sot in to looking for matrimony. *Robb, Streaks of Squatter Life*

**hash, settle one's:** to settle one's business.

1824: The parties settled the hash, and retired to comfortable quarters, to quaff cogniac. *Microscope*, *Albany*, *February 28*

1837: I've settled his hash, though. *Knickerbocker Magazine*, *April*

1849: I completely settled his hash. *Yale Literary Magazine*, *xiv*, p. 179

**high-falutin:** highbrow; stuck up.

1854: Old Mrs. Peabody was allers a dreadful high-falutin critter, with stuck-up notions, and old P. is a soft head, driven by his wife, just as our old rooster is driven about by that cantankerous crabbed Dorking hen. *J. W. Spaulding*, *Weekly Oregonian*, *December 23*

1862: Educated peepul, kernel, ain't got any more wit or common sense than other folks, but they try to make you believe they have, an' will talk high falutin words just to frighten you if they kin. *Seba Smith*, *Major Jack Downing*, *August 14*

**hoe-down:** a Negro dance.

1855: The revellers set to sprawling through various rude high-legged reels and hoedowns. *Knickerbocker Magazine*, *September*

1885: [the negroes] danced their vigorous hoe-downs. *Library Magazine*, *New York*, *July 1*

**hook, on one's own:** on one's own; one's own doing.

1836: Did he make these forgeries on his own hook, or at the instigation of the big bug? *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, *August 24*

1837: The enthusiastic jerseyman, who, without belonging to either side, was found at the battle of Monmouth, fighting on his own hook entirely. *R.M. Bird*, *Nick of the Woods*

**hooter:** an atom; a tiny amount.

1839: Now the Grampus stopt, and didn't buge one hooter. "*Major Jack on Board a Whaler*," *Havana Republican*, *August 21*

1848: Politicians don't care a hooter, so long as their own selfish ends are obtained. *Dow*, *Patent Sermons*, p.6

1853: Let him be as dirty as the mortal in Missouri, who is assessed as real estate, still it makes not a hooter of difference. *Dow*, *Patent Sermons*

**horn:** a glass of liquor or ale.

1824: I went to be after taking one horn. *Microscope*, *Albany*, *April 3*

1840: I'll bet a horn of Monongahela whiskey that you have had your supper. *Knickerbocker Magazine*, *September*

1840: He called lustily for a horn of baldface and mollasses. *Daily Pennant*, *St. Louis*, *April 28*

**horn spoon, by the:** an exclamation of surprise, shock or anger.

1853: "By the horn spoons!" repeated the skipper suddenly. *Knickerbocker Magazine*, *February*

**hornswoggle, honey-fuggled:** to cheat; to pull the wool over one's eyes.

1856: Pardon me for using the word; but Sharp honeyfuggled around Me. *Mr. Bennet*, *Nebraska*, *House of Reps.*,

Congressional Globe, *July 22, p.965*

1860: P.E is going to hornswoggle the Democrats. Oregon Argus, *May 12 1862*: Now we want the particulars as to how much honey fugging and wool pulling was done. Rocky Mountain News, *Denver, August 14*

1865: 1 ain't no giant killer. I ain't no Norwegian bar. I ain't no boar constriker. But I'll be hornswoggled if the talkin an the writin an the slanderin has got to be done all on one side any longer. Some of your folks have got to dry up, or turn our folks loose. *Bill Arp, Letter to Artemus Ward, September 1*

**hoss**: widely used for horse.

1852: That was a long race, I tell you, hosses. *H.C. Watson, Nights in a Blockhouse, p.29*

1853: Hello, old hoss, whar hev you been this coon's age? Paxton, *A Stray Yankee in Texas, p.201*

**huckleberry above a persimmon**: a cut above. The phrase had many variations and shades of meaning.

1836: It is a huckleberry above my persimmon to cipher out how I find myself the most popular bookmaker of the day. Colonel Crockett in Texas, *p.13*

1844: She's a great gal that! Show me another like her any whar, and I am thar directly. She's a huckleberry above most people's persim- mons. Philadelphia Spirit of the Times, *August 24*

1885: I'm a huckleberry above that persimmon. *Admiral Porter, Incidents of the Civil War, p.204*

**huffed, huffy**: angry; irritated; offended.

1800: The Philadelphia Gazette is huffed at our stating a fact. Aurora, *Philadelphia, December 18*

1855: They said that some mischief was going on, and some of them were right huffy about it. *George Smith at the Mormon Tabernacle, Journal of Discourses, March 18*

**hull**: frequently used for whole.

1835: Six months ago, this hull country was the most prosperous in the world. Colonel Crockett's Tour, *p. 79*

1845: "I've bought out the hull grocery," sings outjake Miller, standin' in Capn' Todd's store with a hull raft of tellers. St. Louis Reveille, *September 1*

1849: 1 vow my hull share o' the spoils wouldn't come nigh a V spot. Biglow Papers, *No.8*

**hum**: frequently used for home.

1819: When he talked of hum, I took him for a wag, but soon found he so pronounced home. "*An Englishman*," in the Western Star, *quoted in Massachusetts Spy, May 12*

1848: Wen I left hum, I hed two legs, an' they worn't bad ones neither. Biglow Papers, *No.8*

1856: There wa'nt nobody to hum but her, so I went right in ker dash, and sot down. Weekly Oregonian, *August 2*

1860: I was a little shaver, helping the bigger boys Calvin and Enoch ... to drive the cows hum of an evening. Knickerbocker Magazine, *September*

**humbug**: a deception; a hoax; an imposter; the equivalent of the modern B.S.

1836: Dissection of Joice Heth -Precious Humbug Exposed. The anatomical examination of the body of Joice Heth yesterday, resulted in the exposure of one of the most precious humbugs that ever was imposed upon a credulous community. [Ed. Note: P.T Barnum had claimed the woman was 161 years old.] New York Sun, *February 25*

1873: Wherever these lectures were holden, it became necessary to de- tail a large force of police to preserve the peace, and rough times we often had of it. Indeed, it really seemed that everybody was bent on a row, and perfectly infatuated with humbug. *Edward Savage, Police Records and Recollections, p. 114*

**husking bee, husking frolic**: a social event in which the community came together to husk corn and to drink; they often ended with drunken brawls.

1838: A fight came off at Maysville, Kentucky in which a Mr. Coulster was stabbed in the side, and is dead; a Mr. Gibson was well hacked with a knife; a Mr. Farr was dangerously wounded. This entertainment was the winding up of a corn husking frolic, when all doubtless were right merry with good whiskey. New York Daily Whig

1847: 1 must pass on to the antagonisms of the cornhusking. When the crop was drawn in, the ears were heaped into a long pile or rick, a night fixed on, and the neighbors notified, rather than invited, for it was an affair of mutual assistance. As they assembled at nightfall, the green glass quart whiskey bottle, stopped with a cob, was handed to every one, man and boy, as they arrived, to take a drink. *Dr. Drake, Pioneer Life in Kentucky, pp.54-56*

**I snore, I swan, I Swow:** socially acceptable alternatives to the expression "I swear," which was considered impolite, originating with the youth of New England.

**Johnny, John:** a Chinaman.

1857: He knows. He's seed the johnnies goin' into that there doorway next block. *Thomas Gunn, New York Boarding Houses, p.275*

1873: I passed out of the Chinese theater, with a lady and two children. We had to walk through a crowd of Johns. *Charles Nordhoff, California, p.85*

1878: The melancholy Johns with glazed caps and black pigtales, like a lot of half-drowned crows. *J.H. Beadle, Western Wilds, p.401*

**Jonathan:** the American people. Also known as Brother Jonathan or Uncle Sam.

1846: Jonathan was hard to provoke; but when once you did get him up, he remained at a dead white heat for a long while. *Mr. Root, Ohio, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, December 24*

1848: Jonathan is declared to be in his right in supporting his diplomatic agents like private gentlemen. *Mr. Ingersoll, Pennsylvania, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, June 30*

**Jonathan:** a downeaster; a yankee.

1827: A tall, boney, Jonathan, whose appetite was in proportion to the magnitude of his frame. *Massachusetts Spy, November 14*

1843: Occasionally you will see some honest country Jonathan, with his waggon full of yankee notions. *Yale Literary Magazine, ix, p.44*

**kick:** to protest or to object to something; to complain.

1842: [Members of Congress] kicked against receiving any more petitions. *Philadelphia Spirit of the Times, January*

1857: I have to live under their laws, and when they take a notion to swear away my character, I musn't kick. *J.G. Holland, The Bay Path, p.69*

1888: The tariff is of no good to [the colored man]. But that is not what he kicks about. *New York Herald, July 29*

**knee-high to a ... :** humorous description of short stature or youth. 1824: He has lived with me ever since he was knee-high to a musquitoe. *Letter to the Microscope, Albany, June 12*

1833: A bit of a rogue he was, too, when he wasn't more'n knee-high to a bumblebee. *John Neal, The Downeasters, p.78*

1841: He has been known in the Congaree ever since I was knee high to a splinter. *W.G. Simms, The Kinsmen, p.63*

1853: To see little saplings, some of them scarce knee-high to a milk-stool ... bigger b'hoys, green as unsunned pumpkins.... *Dow, Patent Sermons*

**land sakes:** socially acceptable alternative for Lord's sake, considered to be a profanity.

1846: jedediah, for the land's sake, does my mouth blaze? *Knickerbocker Magazine, January*

1888: Land sakes! Thet poor cretur never had the spunk to kill himself. *Harper's Weekly, January 21*

**lay:** price; terms; salary.

1816- He bought a large drove [of cattle] at a good lay. *Massachusetts Spy, September 4*

1853: A few months saw him handling the ropes upon a whaler, at a good lay. *Captain Priest, p.49*

**let her rip:** let it go!

1853: [Captain Muggss] spirited "let her rip" was an infinite improvement on the "fire" of the old Steuben manual. *Life Scenes, p.209*

1854: As it is all for the good of the party, Let her rip. *Weekly Oregonian, April 22*

1857: Presently I heard, "All set; let her rip." *Knickerbocker Magazine, November*

**like a book:** to speak eloquently or with a large vocabulary.

1829: You talk like a book, Mr. Bond. *Massachusetts Spy, January 28*

1833: [She] sang like a nightingale and talked like a book. *James Hall, Legends of the West, p. II*

1833: An educated and travelled Yankee ... talking like a book, even to the washerwoman. *John Neal, The Downeasters,*

**likely:** able-bodied; attractive; serviceable.

1823: Notice. Will be sold at the mansion house of John Vivion deceased, all the personal estate of said deceased, consisting of Seven Negroes.... Two likely young Girls, between the ages of 20 and 25. Two likely Boys, between the ages of 16 and 20. And one likely young Girl of the age of five years. *Missouri Intelligencer, August 5*

**limb:** the socially acceptable or polite word for leg.

1854: [The Indian maiden] was seated on a rock, her legs (beg pardon, her limbs) stretched far asunder. *Knickerbocker Magazine, June*

**liquor:** to take a drink.

1836: Having liquored, we proceeded on the journey. *Colonel Crockett in Texas, p. 70*

1839: It's a bargain then ... come, let's liquor on it. *Marryat, Diary in America, p.239*

**little end of the horn:** same as short end of the stick. To come out of a situation disadvantaged.

1805: I am very much afraid I shall come out at the little end of the horn. *Baltimore Evening Post, July 5*

1817: If the farmers and the traders, instead of attending closely to their proper callings, are busy here and there, they will assuredly come out at the little end of the horn. *Massachusetts Spy, February 19*

1855: You used to hear brother Joseph tell about this people being crowded into the little end of the horn, and if they kept straight ahead they were sure to come out at the big end. *Brigham Young, April 8*

**log-rolling:** a community effort to roll logs and clear land for a cabin's construction.

1833: The good villagers resorted to what, in woodland phrase, is called log-rolling, which means a combined effort of many to do what is either difficult or impossible to one. *J.K. Paulding, Banks of the Ohio*

1889: In some localities more thickly settled than others, neighbors render each other mutual assistance. In this case, the trunks of very large trees were cut down, chopped into logs, rolled together, and set on fire. Hence the phrase log-rolling in the vocabulary of our political common-places. *Phelan, History of Tennessee, p.28*

**mad as a March hare:** very angry, from early in the century.

**make a die:** to die.

1825: I wonder [the dog] didn't go mad; or make a die of it. *John Neal, Brother Jonathan, p.398*

1845: They said Billy was gwine to make a die of it, and had sent for lem. *W.T. Thompson, Chronicles of Pineville, P. 72*

1848: I'm afraid I'm going to make a die of it. I'm going to create a vacancy. *Stray Subjects, p. 195*

**man alive:** popular exclamation expressing surprise, shock, etc.

1840: Man alive! what do you put yourself in such a plaguy passion for? *Mrs. Kirkland, A New Home, p.168*

1845: Man alive! I never heard of sich a audacious perceedin'in my life. This town's got a monstrous bad name for meanery and shecoonery of all sorts, but I never know'd they 'low'd pirates here before. *W.T. Thompson, Chronicles of Pineville, p.47*

**mind, have a:** to have a notion; to be willing.

1803: He, having a mind to coax the dog to stay with him, took a piece of bread. *Massachusetts Spy, March 2*

1829: If they have a mind to take the trouble, let them tell fourty lies a week. *Massachusetts Spy, January 28*

1830: I s'pose a Governor has a right to flog anybody he's a mind to. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p.87*

1878: Well, figger it as you're a mind to; maybe you'll die of somethin' else after all. *Rose T. Cooke, Happy Dodd, ch. xii*

**mitten, to get or give the:** a lady, in turning down a proposal, is said to give the gentleman the mitten.

1838: Young gentlemen who have got the mitten, and young gentlemen who think they are going to get the mitten, always sythe [sigh]. *Joseph C. Neal, Petter Ploddy, p. 14*

1853: Uncle Jo's gal gin him the mitten, to the singing school. *Turnover, A Tale of New Harnpshire, p.8*

1855: He went off suddenly to California; likely enough, Kitty gave him the mitten. *D.G. Mitchell, Fudge Doings, p.116*

**mosey:** to saunter or shuffle along.

1836: You're not going to smoke me. So mosey off. *Philadelphia Public Ledger, December 2*

1846: Lanty Oliphant! bawled Dogberry; ... Mosey in and be sworn. *A Quarter Race in Kentucky, p.38*

1888: A third moseyed off some distance, to sit down and lick his wounds. *Chicago Inter-ocean, February 6*

**most:** used for almost.

1815: Dorothy vows she will heat some water and scald any man that comes for any further taxes. I'm most afraid to see a stranger ride up. *Massachusetts Spy, June 14*

1830: I'm plagued most to death with these ere pesky sore eyes. *Massachusetts Spy, October 13*

1840: I reckon he drank most two quarts of [catmint tea] through the night. *A.B. Longstreet, Georgia Scenes, p.193*

**mought:** used for might, especially in Philadelphia, where Cockneyisms (see entry) were popular.

1843: It was about two o'clock, he guessed it mought be more, or it mought be less. *Cornelius Mathews, Writings, p.14*

1848: You mought as well look for a needle in a haystack, as try to find a nigger in New York. *Majorjones, Sketches of Travel, p.12*

1855: The reglar Fakilty mout have save life, then agin they mout not. *Knickerbocker Magazine, March*

**mudsill:** the uneducated, working class.

1858: In all social systems there must be a class to do the menial duties, to perform the drudgery of life. That is, a class requiring but a low order of intellect and but little skill... It constitutes the very mudsill of society and of political government. *Mr. Hammond, South Carolina, U.S. Senate, Congressional Globe, March 4, p.71* 1862: [The secessionists] speak of the labouring millions of the free States as the mudsills of society, as a pauper banditti, as greasy mechanics and filthy operatives. *Mr. Julian, Indiana, Home of Reps., Congressional Globe, janua7y 14, P.328*

1863: It pleased certain Southern orators and writers to characterize [the North] as the abode of the mudsills and tinkers. *O.J. Victor, History of the Southern Rebellion, p.93*

**nigger In the woodpile:** a way of explaining the disappearance of fuel or any unsolved mystery.

1862: These gentlemen ... spoke two whole hours ... in showing -to borrow an elegant phrase, the paternity of which belongs, I think, to their side of the House -that there was a nigger in the woodpile. *Mr. Kelley, Pennsylvania, House of Reprs., Congressional Globe, June 3, p.252 7*

**no-account:** worthless.

1853: Yes, Massa, dem no'count calves done fool me again. *Paxton, A Stray Yankee in Texas, p.282*

1881: Mitchell of Oregon is another of the no-account men. *Philadelphia Record, February 8*

1888: Did I come way off down in this here no count country to wash white counterpanes for dogs? *Mrs. Elizabeth Custer, Tenting on the Plains, p.255*

**nohow, no way you can fix it:** not at all.

1833: They don't raise such humans in the Old Dominion, no how. *James Hall, Harpe's Head, P.91*

1833: This ain't no part of a priming to places that I've seed afore, no how. *jameshall, Legends of the West, p. 190*

1836: [They] would have nothing to do with the affair, nohow they could fix it. *Colonel Crockett in Texas, p.125*

1843: I couldn't read a chapter in the Bible no how you could fix it, bless the Lordl R. Carlton, *The New Purchase, P.141*

1854: Here's my six-shooter, but you can't toll me up thar, nohow. *Knickerbocker Magazine, June*

**not a jugful:** not at all.

1835: Did you ever follow the business of peddling? Not by a jugful, Mister; I never was one of your wooden nutmeg fellers. *D.P. Thompson, Adventures of Timothy Peacock, p.87*

1854: Take medicine, said 1. "Not by a jugful," said Jim. *H.H. Riley, Puddleford, p. 162*

1855: Not by a jugful, Mr. Souley; Cuba is the most valuable patch of ground we've got. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downin. p.429*

**notions:** a wide range of miscellaneous articles for sale.

1819: This cleared up the mystery of the toys and play-things, which, with hats, bonnets, shoes and stockings of various sizes, [and] Webster's spelling-books, were part of the notions. *"An Englishman, " in the Western Star, May 12*

1830: I thought I'd go and see about my load of turkeys and other notions. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p.49*

1846: She had a cargo of notions, consisting of Boston china, onions, apples, coffins in nests, cheese, potatoes, etc. *Cornelius Mathews, Writings, P.309*

**adds, ask no:** ask no favor.

1857: 1 ask no odds of them, no more than I do of the dirt I walk on. *H.C. Kimball at the Bowe7y, Salt Lake City, Journal of Discourses, July 12*

1857: 1 swore I would send them to hell across lots if they meddled with me; and I ask no more odds of all hell today. *Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, July 26, P. 78*

**off the reel:** immediately.

1833: [I had a mind] to have a fight with him off the reel, and settle the right of soil at once. *J.K. Paulding, Banks of the Ohio, p. 78*

1856: You have got to promise right off the reel that you won't say another word. *Harriet Beecher Stowe, Dred, ch.xlviii*

**old man, old woman:** one's spouse. Also, one's father or mother.

1843: "He's your old man, mam?" Mrs. C. assented. *R. Carlton, The New Purchase, p.62*

1855: As we were talk about the war [she] said . . . "What does your old man think about it?" I answered as well as I could, and am amused at this appellation, purely western, she has given my husband. *Sara Robinson, Kansas, p. 138*

1859: [She] feels that she has a right to spend every cent that the old man allows her. *J.G. Holland, Titcomb's Letters, p. 195*

**old orchard:** whiskey.

1810: Come, ye lovers of Old Orchard, let us take a walk into the fields. *Robert Thomas, The Farmer's Almanac, September*

1844: The old orchard went merrily around ... tea, coffee, and old orchard served to wash down the good things. *Lowell Offering*

**one-horse:** small, limited, inferior.

1854: I'm done with one-horse bedsteads, I am. *Aneed, New York journal of Commerce*

1857: A Mormon elder says he has visited and preached in the following places in Texas: Empty-Bucket, Rake-pocket, Doughplate, Buck- snort, Possum Trot, Buzzard Roost, Hardscrabble, Nippentuck, and Licksillet; most of which, however, he says, are merely one-horse towns. *Harper's Weekly, November 14*

1858: A country clergyman, with a one-story intellect and a one-horse vocabulary. *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, ch.ii*

1859: Close by the little one-horse church, skirted by the belt of cedars. *Knickerbocker Magazine, March*

**opine:** to be of the opinion.

1830: Not a few leeches in that city, we opine, will vote for him. *Northern Watchman, August 17*

1842: [General Winfield Scott] had better keep his fingers to scratch his own ears with, we opine. *Philadelphia Spirit of the Times, August 27*

1854: We opine that he would have carried with him ... prayers and good wishes. *Weekly Oregonian, October 7*

**Ornary:** mean.

1830: You ornery fellow! do you pretend to call me to account for my language? *Massachusetts Spy, May 28*

1854: [He was] sent to Freehold court-house last term for 'busin' his wife. Awful ornary! *Knickerbocker Magazine, March*

1857: That poor ornary cuss of a red-haired, cross-eyed grocery-keeper. *Knickerbocker Magazine, November*

**painter, panter:** popular pronunciation and spelling of panther.

1803: My master ... said that I ought to live among painters and wolves, and sold me to a Georgia man for two hundred dollars. *John Davis, Travels in the U.S.A., p.382*

1845: It might be a painter that stirred [the dog], for he could scent that beast a great distance. *W.G. Simms, The Wigwam and the Cabin, p.48*

1850: The bar and painter got so sassy, that they'd cum to the tother side of the bayou, and see which could talk impudenest. "Don't you want some bar meat or painter blanket?" they'd ask; bars is monstrous fat, and painter's hide is mighty warm. *Odd Leaves, p. 170*

**pardner, pard:** friendly variation of partner, popularly used in mining camps.

1854: Pardners keep clus arter one another. *H.H. Riley, Puddleford, p.126*

1883: The mine is wirked by two pardners, who dig and wash by turns. *D. Pidgeon, An Engineer's Holiday, p.132*

1893: Many an old hunter has buried his pard in the Missouri River. *Alex Major, Seventy Years on the Frontier, p.260*

**peaked:** thin or sickly in appearance.

1859: He looks peakeder than ever. Professor at the Breakfast Table, *ch.9* 1860: I lived on bread-and-milk nearly six weeks, until my face grew as peaked as a crow's beak. *Yale Literary Magazine, xxv, p.169*

1871: His mother was jest about the poorest, peakedest old body over to Sherburne. *Harriet Beecher Stowe, Miss Elderkin's Pitcher*

1878: When I came here, she was as peaked as a young rat. *Rose T. Cooke, Happy Dodd, ch.36*

**peart:** fresh and happy; sprightly.

1820: These little fixins make a man feet right peart. Hall, *Letters fi-om the Wes% p.304*

1833: I wish that fellow would shut the door; he must think that we were all raised in a saw-mill; and then he looks so peart whenever he comes in. *C.F. Hoffman, A Winter in the Far West, p.209*

1888: [The boys] from being starved, wretched, and dull, grew quite peart under [Eliza's] good care. *Mrs. Elizabeth Custer, Tenting on the Plains, p. 171*

**person of color:** a Negro.

1801: People of color.... This new fangled name for the black race, which has ... crept into the vocabulary of the U.S., seems to have been borrowed from that fruitful source of innovations, the philosophical school of Paris. "Z," *Port Folio, p.163*

1806: At the white ball-room [in New Orleans] no lady of colour is admitted. *Thomas Ashe, Travels in America*

1815: (Died) in Grafton, Sarah, a woman of color. *Massachusetts Spy, November 29*

1833: "Well, as I was saying, the nigger"- "I think he might call um gemman of choler," muttered blackey. *I.K. Paulding, Banks of the Ohio, p.213*

**Philadelphia lawyer:** popularly credited with nearly superhuman intellect by the masses.

1803: It would puzzle a dozen Philadelphia lawyers to unriddle the conduct of the democrats. *Balance, November 15, p.363*

1824: The New England folks have a saying, that three Philadelphia lawyers are a match for the very devil himself. *Salem Observer, March 13*

1824: Politics has got into a jumble that a Philadelphy lawyer couldn't steer through them. *John P. Kennedy, Quodlibet p. 160*

1848: It would puzzle a Philadelphia lawyer to pint out the latitude of enything like [the United States] in all creation. *W.E. Burton, Waggeries, p.68*

**picayune:** used to signify something small or frivolous. (See also Money and Coinage, *p. 148.*)

1837: The hon. senator from Kentucky by way of ridicule calls this a picayune bill. *Mr. Young, Illinois, U.S. Senate, Congressional Globe, December 22*

1841: Some gentlemen affected to consider it a small concern, a pica- yune affair. *Mr. Underwood, Kentucky, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, February 20*

**picture:** one's face; one's person.

1825: Young Bob's dad - consarn his pictur - spry as a cat, swom like a fish. *John Neal, Brother Jonathan, iii, p.387*

1829: "Consarn his picture!" said Jeff in a low tone. *John P. Kennedy, Swallow Barn, p.448*

1847: Wall, my sister Marth made me a bran new pair of buckskin trowsers to go in, and rile my pictur if she didn't put stirrups to 'em to keep 'em down. *Robb, Streaks of Squatter Life, p.61*

**Pile on the agony:** to add insult to injury.

1852: If you have any more agony to pile on him, put it on. *Knickerbocker Magazine, October*

1856: I haven't piled on the agony as I might have done.

**Knickerbocker Magazine, December**

1857: Three raving, lying, free-negro journals, is piling up the agony a little too steep. Oregon Weekly Times, *November 14*  
**plank, plank down, plank up:** to pay in cash.

1824: His guardy was sent for, and he planked the cash. Nantucket inquirer, *April 19*

1835: His patient returned, and, planking ten dollars, took possession of her invaluable medicine. *Daniel P. Thompson, Adventures of Timothy Peacock, P.104*

1851: He would plank down the very money he had received. *Daniel B. Woods, Sixteen Months at the Gold Diggings, p. 75*

**plug-ugly:** a Baltimore rowdy; any rowdy or ruffian.

1857: The city of Baltimore, from whose midst the plug uglies claim to hail. Oregon Weekly Times, *August 1*

1863: Colonel Butler is a tall, fully developed, imposing man, devoid of the slightest resemblance to an ideal Plug Ugly. *James Parton, Butler in New Orleans, p. 79*

1865: A brawny fellow, with a plug-ugly countenance, looked over my shoulder at the book. *A.D. Richardson, The Secret Service, p.108*

**plum, plumb:** entirely; completely

1850: His breeches split plum across with the strain, and the piece of wearin' truk wot's next the skin made a monstrous putty flag. *Odd Leaves, P.51*

1858: He wur plum crazy an'jumped over the frunt ov the pulpit. *Olympia Pioneer, February 26*

1893: "You're plumb crazy," she remarked. *Harper's Weekly, p.1211*

**plunder:** personal belongings; baggage.

1815: We heard these men uniformly calling their baggage plunder. *T. Flint, Recollections, p.6*

1817: [We carried] our plunder (as the Virginians call baggage) in a light Jersey wagon. *J.K. Paulding, Letters from the South, p.38*

1818: When you arrive at a house [in Kentucky], the first inquiry is, where is your plunder? as if you were a bandit; and out is sent a slave to bring in your plunder- i.e. your trunk, or valise. *Arthur Singleton, Letters from the South and West, p. 106*

1842: [In Virginia] you hear the driver say, "Here, you nigger fellow, tote this lady's plunder to her room." Upstairs is pronounced "upst- arrs"; the words "bear" and "fear" are pronounced "barr" and "farr" ; and one passenger was told, "The room upstarrs is quite prepared, so that your plunder may be toted. . . , whenever you've a mind." *J.S. Buckingham, Slave States, p.293*

**pony up, post the pony:** pay up.

1838: It was my job to pay all the bills. "Salix, pony up at the bar, and lend us a levy." *J.C. Neal, Charcoal Sketches*

**poor as Job's turkey:** very poor.

1840s: The professor is as poor as job's turkey, if it wasn't for that powerful salary the trustees give him. *R. Carlton, The New Purchase, Vol. 11, p.85*

**powerful:** great; extreme; a large quantity.

1833: Gentlemen, good evening; this has been a powerful hot day. *James Hall, liarpe's Head, p.86*

1835: He was powerful tired. *Washington Ining, Tour of the Prairies, ch.xiii*

1869: Our men has mostly gone across to Californy to see what's the chances for fodder. Folks tell us it's powerful dry over there. *J. Ross Browne, Apache Country, p.461*

**pucker:** in a state of irritation or anger.

1826: My wife will be in a fine pucker when she finds this sum ex- hausted. *Massachusetts Spy, November 1*

1837: A terrier dog in a pucker is a good study for anger. *J.C. Neal, Charcoal Sketches, P.124*

1847: If I am delayed, Blair and Rives will get in a pucker. *Robb, Streaks of Squatter Life, p. 15*

**puke:** a Missourian.

1838: The suckers of Illinoy, the pukers of Missouri, and the corncrackers of Virginia. *Haliburton, The Clockmaker, ii,*

1852: Sundry Hoosiers, Buckeyes, Suckers, Pukes, and Wolvereens, all wide awake, and ready for business. Knickerbocker Magazine, April

1856: You can search the house, but as for this puke of a Missourian, he shall not come in. *Sara Robinson, Kansas, P.205*

**pull foot:** to leave in a hurry.

1825: Yahl how [the Indians] pulled foot, when they seed us comin'. *John Neal, Brother Jonathan, p. 107*

1831: Jerry pulled foot for home like a streak of lightning. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p. 142*

1837: He had pulled foot for Baltimore, and sold the rest of his tooth powder. Philadelphia Public Ledger, *March 6*

**quilting bee:** a social event in which women get together to make a quilt. 1832: The females have ... meetings called quilting bees, when many assemble to work for one, in padding or quilting bed coverings or comforters. *S.G. Goodrich, System of Universal Geography, p.107*

1835: He informed us that his wife had got a number of her neighbors with her for a quilting frolic. *C.J. Latrobe, The Rambler in North America, p. 135*

**rambunctious:** rowdy, disorderly or boisterous.

1847: [An old he-bar] is as ramstugonous an animal as a log-cabin loafer in the dog-days. *A Swim for a Deer, P. 120*

1851: The old lady bawled out, "There comes our ramstuginous little doctor." *An Arkansaw Doctor, p.81*

1856: You rambunctious old wool-grower! *San Francisco Call, December 17*

**reckon:** to think or guess.

1819: Asking very civilly, "Can we breakfast here?" I have received a shrill "I reckon so." *Massachusetts Spy, January 8*

1855: Boys say with us, and everywhere, I reckon, "You worry my dog, and I'll worry your cat." *Dr. Ross, Tennessee, in the "New School" General Assembly, Buffalo*

**retiracy:** retirement.

1843: I'd a powerful sight sooner go into retiracy, nor consent to that bill. *R. Carlton, The New Purchase, p. 74*

1851: If we didn't elect him, I'd go into retiracy. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p.341*

**ride out on a rail:** to be forced to leave town.

1866: Others proposed giving him a good coat of tar and feathers, and riding him out of town on a rail. *Seba Smith, Way Down East, p.251*

**rip-roaring, rip-staver, rip-snortin':** an impressive person or thing.

1833: In ten minutes he yelled enough, and swore I was a rip-stavur. *Sketches of Davy Crockett, p.144*

1846: What a rip-snortin' red head you have got! *Yale Literary Magazine* 1856: "Hallo, judge," said Major H., "that's a rip-roaring hat you've got." *San Francisco Call, December 19*

**rum-hole:** a small drinking establishment, especially in New York.

1872: The State of New York alone, we believe, uses the term rum-holes for its smaller grog shops. *De Vere*

**Sabbaday, Sabberday,** the Sabbath day.

1833: He makes poetry himself sabbadays- made more poetry 'an you could shake a stick at. *John Neal, The Downeasters, p. 135*

1848: Capting, I sorter recking it ain't entered into your kalkilation as this here is Sabberday. *W.E. Burton, Waggeries, p.16*

**sakes alive:** the equivalent of good heavens or for God's sake.

1846: "Law sakes alive," was the reply, "I ain't no how." *Mrs. Kirkland, Western Clearings, p. 78*

**Salt River:** to row someone up Salt River is to beat him up or to give him hell.

1833: See if I don't row you up Salt River before you are many days older. *J.K. Paulding, Banks of the Ohio, p. 133*

1838: When you want to be rowed up Salt River again, just tip me with the wink. *B. Drake, Tales and Sketches, p.36*

1843: If I don't row you up Salt Crick in less nor no time, my name's not Sam Townsend. *R. Carlton, The New Purchase, p.261*

**Sam Hill:** euphemism for the devil.

1839: What in sam hill is that feller ballin' about? "Majorjack on a Whaler," Havana Republican, *August 21*

1868: He had bought him a little bobtailed mouse-colored mule, and was training him like Sam Hill. *Mrs. Elizabeth Custer, Following the Guidon, p.142*

**Savage as a Meat Axe:** extremely savage.

1835: A little dried up man, who was whetting his knife against the side of the fire-place, and looking as savage as a meat axe. *James Hall, Tales of the Border, p.58*

1842: Ridin' makes one as savage as a meat axe. *Mrs. Kirkland, Forest Life, p.126*

**savagerous:** savage.

1837: The strongest man in Kentucky, and the most sevragerous at a tussle. *R.M. Bird, Nick of the Woods, P.96*

1849: The turtle popped out its head, and rolled its eyes, while a sort of wheeze issued from its savagerous mouth. *Frontier Guardian, August 8*

**school-ma'am, school-marm:** a woman teacher.

1840: At the age of fifteen were we qualified for the responsible station of country school ma'ams. *Lowell Offering, p.74*

1864: Before this day of larger ideas, to be a school-ma'am was to be a stiff, conceited, formal, critical character. *J.G. Holland, Letters to the Joneses, p.254*

1878: He up and married one o' them school-marms sent out from Boston. *J.H. Beadle, Western Wilds, p.188*

**seed:** often used for saw or seen.

1825: Yah! how [the Indians] pulled foot, when they seed us comin. *John Neal, Brother Jonathan, P.107*

**set by, set much by:** to regard; to esteem. From early in the century.

**set store by, to:** to set value upon; to appreciate.

1840s: He [the Ohio boatman] observed very feelingly, that he set more store to this song than to all the rest. *Hall, Letters from the West*

**seven by nine:** something or someone of inferior or common quality, originating from common window panes of that size.

1846: [The charge was] re-echoed by every little paltry seven by nine Locofoco print, and every brawling bar-room politician. *Mr. Root, Ohio, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, December 24*

**shakes, great:** of great consequence.

1825: I'm no great shakes at braggin'- I never was. *John Neal, Brother Jonathan, P.195*

**shaw, pshaw!:** an expression of contempt or incredulity.

1845: O, shaw, 'taint gwine to rain, no how, and I'm all fixed. *W. T. Thompson, Chronicles of Pineville, p. 165*

1846: She hollered fur her fiddler, but oh, shaw, he couldn't do hir a bit of good. *Quarter Race, P.89*

1850: P'shaw, gal, your wits are turned through going to school. *Knickerbocker Magazine, September*

1857: Pshal nonsense! will nothing satisfy you? *Knickerbocker Magazine, May*

**Shecoonery:** a corruption of chicanery.

1845: This town's got a monstrous bad name for meanery and shecoonery of all sorts. *W.T. Thompson, Chronicles of Pineville, p.47*

**Shines, to cut:** to pull practical jokes or tricks; to make funny business.

1839: We cut a few shines with the girls, and started to the tavern. *History of Virgil A. Stewart, p.69*

1842: It is said that some females in England cut up a shine in order to go to Botany Bay, where they are sure of finding husbands. *Philadelphia Spirit of the Times, September 15*

1851: My horse snorted, he kicked, he rared up, and cut more shines than a snapping turtle on hot iron. *An Arkansaw Doctor, p.87*

**shucks:** worthless people or things (corn or pea shucks).

1847: He ain't wuth shucks, and ef you don't lick him for his onmannerly note, you ain't wuth shucks, nuther. Robb, *Streaks of Squatter Life*, p.135

1851: I kalkilated them curs o' hisn wasn't worth shucks in a bar fight. Polly Peablossom's Wedding, p.51

**Shut pan:** shut up; shut your mouth.

1833: Shut pan, and sing small, or I'll throw you into the drink. *J.K. Paulding*, *Banks of the Ohio*, p.213

1835: I shut pan on the subject, and fell to eating my dinner. Colonel Crockett's Tour, p. 102

1853: Spicer raised his hand to stop the speech, but the lawyer wouldn't shut pan. Paxton, *A Stray Yankee in Texas*, p.139

**sin to Moses, sin to Crockett:** something that would shame either Moses or Davy Crockett.

1833: The way he fights is a sin to Crockett. *Sketches of Davy Crockett*, p.30

1838: "Ay, ay, sir; it's a sin to Moses, such a trade .... said the stoker. *E. Flagg*, *The Far West*, p. 71

1861: The way some of your city wags stuff our honest clod-hoppers is a sin to Moses. *Oregon Argus*, *March 23*

**skedaddle:** to nee.

1861: No sooner did the traitors discover their approach than they ske- daddled, a phrase the Union boys up here apply to the good use the seceshers make of their legs in time of danger. *Missouri Democrat*, Augwi

1862: Skadaddle is a newly invented word, now greatly in vogue among our brave soldiers on the Potomac. It is equivalent to the verb to absquatulate, and is like that other army verb (to vamoose) which our soldiers brought from their campaign in Mexico. *Oregon Argus*, *January 18*

**skeery:** to be afraid or cautious.

1845: I was skeery and bashful at first, in meeting with a young and beautiful creature like her. *W.G. Simms*, *The Wigwam and the Cabin*, p.108

1847: I ain't easy skeer'd, but I own up that old fellow did kind a make me skeery. *Robb*, *Streaks of Squatter Life*, p.144

1851: My! I feel so skeary-like, for I've never been aboard one of these steaming boats. *Lady E.S. Wortley*, *Travels*, p.108

**slantindicular:** slanting.

1832: This is sorter a slantindickelar road, stranger [said the Yankee]. *Memoirs of a Nullifier*, p.37

1833: He looked up at me slantendicular, and I looked down at him slantendicular; and he took out a chaw of turbaccur, and said he, "I don't value you that." *Sketches of Davy Crockett*, P.144

**slick:** to fix or dress up.

1840: Mr. F. was slicked up for the occasion. *Mrs. Kirkland*, *A New Home*, p.243

1847: H. went to work, loading up his big bore, with as much care as a girl fixes herself when she slicks up. *The Great Kalamazoo Hunt*, p.44

**smart, right:** a large quantity.

1842: I asked whether the people made much maple-sugar when a planter answered, "Yes, they do, I reckon, right smart," meaning in great quantities. *J.S. Buckingham*, *Slave States*, p.327

1855: Thar ain't been much rain lately, but thar's right smart of snow, and its about half melted snow. *Famham*, *Travels in Prairie Land*, p.361

1856: I sold right smart of eggs dis yer summer. *Harriet Beecher Stowe*, *Dred*, ch.39

**smart as a steel trap:** particularly intelligent and quick.

1830: A feller with an eye like a hawk, and quick as a steel trap, for a trade. *Seba Smith*, *Major Jack Downing*, p.49

1856: [A little girl] with sparkling, intelligent eyes, thin, expressive lips, and as smart as a steel trap. *Knickerbocker Magazine*, *September*

**smile:** a drink; to take a drink.

1852: I imbibed a final smile to my own health, and left my allies alone. *Yale Literary Magazine*

1870: [This gentleman] asked me to smile. I had learned by experience that this is the slang phrase for taking a drink. I smiled all the more readily, because the morning was intensely cold. *W.F. Rae*, *Westward by Rail*, p.337

1888: We took a smile of old Bourbon apiece. *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, *February 6*

**soaplock:** a rowdy. Named after a hairstyle (cut short behind and long in front and parted to fall below the ears on the sides, sometimes as far as the collar) worn by such a rowdy.

1840: In that living, moving, ranting band, the boys, negroes, loafers, and a new species of the same animal, familiarly known in the city of New York as soap-locks, took the lead. *Mr. Watterson, Tennessee, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, April 2, p.376*

1840: The hostility between the Yankee soap locks and the Dutch musicians, in regard to Ellsler serenade, has come to a happy termination. *Daily Pennant, St. Louis, September 12*

1848: You will behave yourselves as men, patriots, and gentlemen should; and not like soaplocks and rowdies. *Dow, Patent Sermons, p.164*

**sockdologer:** a powerful punch or blow.

1837: I hit him one polt-it was what I call a sogdolloger-that made him dance like a ducked cat. *R.M Bird, The Hawks of Hawk-hollow, p.105*

1848: As I aimed a sockdollager at him, he ducked his head. *Jones's Fight, p.41*

1860: Anti rushed on, with great force, and planted a sockdologer on the bridge of Wheel-horse's snout. *Oregon Argus, June 16*

**some pumpkins:** someone or something impressive.

1846: One of them thinks he's got a scrub (horse) that's some pumpkins. *A Quarter Race in Kentucky, p. 118*

1851: We went on until the third or fourth set, and I thought I was some pumpkins at dancing. *An Arkansaw Doctor, p.97*

1853: "Got a smart chunk of a pony thar." "Yes, Sir, he is some pumpkins sure; offered ten cows and calves for him; he's death on a quarter." *Paxton, A Stray Yankee in Texas, p.44*

**Sot:** a corruption of set or sat.

1833: The elegantest carriage that ever mortal man sot eyes on. *James Hall, Legend of the West, p.185*

1837: Why don't you buy a digestion of the laws, so as to know what's right and what's wrong? It's all sot down. *J.C. Neal, Charcoal Sketches, p.189*

1857: Well, Squire, I sot right down on a stone. *J.G. Holland, The Bay Path, p.197*

**sour on:** to get sick of someone or something; to give up something out of disgust.

1862: Guess the M.P. will sour on William C., when he has seen him for about fifteen minutes. *Rocky Mountain News, Denver, November 20*

**spree:** to go out on a spree is to go out and carouse; to party and get drunk.

1834: He is not quarrelsome, even when he gets caught in what they call in the West a spree. *Albert Pike, Sketches, p.32*

1846: [He had] struck him with a fire-brand, and burnt his body in several places, during a drunken spree. *Rufus Sage, Scenes in the Rocky Mountains, p. 73*

1864: You came into the neighborhood with a cigar in your mouth, and a reputation for spreeing. *J. G. Holland, Letters to the Joneses, p.229*

**Square:** sometimes used for Squire.

1850: Look o' here, Square, one o' them quarters you gin me last was a pistareen. *Knickerbocker Magazine, February*

1857: Well, Square, I don't feel in fighting trim. *J.G. Holland, The Bay Path, p.55*

**squatter:** one who settles on land without legal title, a widespread practice in the West. (See also Cowboys and the Wild West, p.250.)

1809: This unceremonious mode of taking possession of new land was technically termed squatting, and hence is derived the appellation of squatters. *Washington Irving, History of New York, p. 188*

1810: If the nation were put to action against every Squatter, for the recovery of their lands, we should only have law suits, no lands for sale. *Thomas Jefferson, "The Batture at New Orleans," Works, viii, p.588*

1821: A squatter is a person who plants himself in the wilderness upon any piece of ground which he likes, without purchasing it of the proprietor. Large tracts have been occupied in this manner. *T. Dwight, Travels, p.221*

**Squire:** a justice of the peace or magistrate.

1817: He is not in the least danger of receiving an uncivil answer, even if he should address himself to a square. John Bradbury, *Travels*, p.320

1822: It was proposed by some of them to couple themselves, and go to a young justice and be married. This it was thought would be fine fun, and a clever joke on the young Squire. *Massachusetts Spy*, May 22

1844: I've snaked it about these woods for a week, looking for a squire to hitch us. *Yale Literary Magazine*, x, P.167

**States, the:** used in the western territories to denote the organized states back east.

1845: Here we met Dr. White, a sub-Indian agent, accompanied by three others, on their way from Oregon to the States. *Joel Palmer, Journal*, P.50

1854: President Young says he does not know of but one old bachelor in all the Territory of Utah, and he has gone to the States. *Orson Hyde, at the Mormon Tabernacle, Journal of Discourses, October 6, ii, p.84* 1857: A man writing from Southern Oregon to the N.Y. Tribune says that some of the people are going to California, and others are talking of going back to America. *New York Tribune*

**steady habits:** the land of steady habits was New England.

1813: Troops were assembled, ready to repel any invasion of the soil of steady habits. *Massachusetts Spy*, June 16

1828: Ours is the land of steady habits. And this town is remarkable for severity of religious discipline, if not for morality. *Yankee, Portland, Maine, April 2*

1830: A real blue-nose, fresh from the land of steady habits. *Northern Watchman, Troy, New York, November 30*

**store:** the word shop was used most popularly throughout the 1700s but gradually gave way to store in the early 1800s.

1883: In America, the word shop is confined to the place where things are made or done, as barber-shop, carpenter-shop; a place where things are sold is a store. *E.A. Freeman, impressions of the U.S., p.61*

**streaked:** frightened or annoyed.

1834: I felt streaked enough, for the balls were whistling over our heads. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p. 18*

1878: I felt orful streaked, but I knowed [my rifle] had never failed yet. *J.H. Beadle, Western Wilds, p.416*

**suspicion:** to suspect.

1834: They began to suspicion, maybe, that they had got the wrong sow by the ear. *The Kentuckian in New York, p.64*

1836: I suspicion he's one of that bounding brotherhood. *Knickerbocker Magazine, January*

1851: He didn't know I was thar. If he had er suspicioned it, he'd no more swore than he'd dar'd kiss my Sal. *Polly Peablossom's Wedding, p.51*

1890: They kinder suspicioned from my looks that I had found good prospects. *Haskins, Argonauts of California, p.250*

**tote:** to carry.

1833: In our day, merchants were well enough satisfied to tote their plunder upon mules and pack horses. *James Hall, Legends of the West, p.49*

1833: I brought at four turns as much as I could tote, and put it on the bank. *Sketches of Davy Crockett, p.103*

1851: Thar goes as clever a feller as ever toted an ugly head. *Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs, p.140*

1852: I heard it said when I was a child, that it was allowable to make the Devil tote brick to build a church. *Mr. Stanley, North Carolina, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, June 12, p.693*

**trace:** a trail or path.

1829: George offered to take the trace through the woods to the bank of the Mississippi, where the physician resided. *Timothy Flint, George Mason, p.41*

1833: On either side was the thick forest, sometimes grown up with underbrush to the margin of the trace. *James Hall, Legends of the West, p.187*

1834: The trace had been rudely cut out by some of the earlier travellers through the Indian country, merely traced out, - and hence perhaps the name -by a blaze, or white spot, made upon the trees by hewing them from the bark. *W.G. Simms, Guy Rivers, p.62*

**truck, spun truck:** garden produce intended for market. Later, it came to mean any quantity of "stuff."

1833: [It was remarked that] it took a powerful chance of truck to feed such a heap of folks. *James Hall, Legends of the*

West, p. 9

1840: And what did they do for Lucy's cough, Mis' Barney? O dear me, they gin her a powerful chance o' truck. I reckon, first and last, she took at least a pint o' lodimy. *A.B. Longstreet, Georgia Scenes, p.193*

1857: Women exchanging their wool-socks, bees' wax, tow-linen, etc., for spun truck, apron check, dye-stuff, and so on. *Knickerbocker Magazine, August*

1862: School larnin is mighty poor truck to put into a feller's head, onless he's got a good deal of brains there. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, December 6*

**tuckered out:** exhausted.

1853: Set us to runnin, an I could tucker him; but he would beat me to jumpin, all holler. Turnover, A Tale of New Hampshire, p.59

1857: You got all tuckered out, playin'and runnin'out doors, and would come in with your eyes lookin' as heavy as lead. *J.G. Holland, The Bay Path, p.59*

**vamose:** to leave quickly.

1848: The united faces of the company would have reached a mile. They bolted, mizzled, flew, vamosed. *Stray Subjects, p. 198*

1855: Our hero vamosed rather hurriedly. *Oregon Weekly Times, June 16*

1857: Another pair ofjail-birds have vamosed the logjail at Jacksonville. The new institution, it is hoped, will not prove so leaky. *Oregon Weekly Times, August 1*

**varment, varmint:** a wild animal or objectional person.

1827: They scent plunder; and it would be as hard to drive a hound from his game as to throw the varmints [Indians] from its trail. *James Fenimore Cooper, The Prairie, p.93*

1837: The fossil remnant of some antediluvian varmint, in the shape of a molar tooth, was dug up. *Baltimore Commerical Transcript, August 25*

1842: Killed. A mad dog in Locust Street yesterday. The varmint had run into the midst of a colored temperance meeting. *Philadelphia Spirit of the Times, June 6*

1858: For nearly a fortnight a regular live comet has been visible. Time of appearance, early in the evening. It is rumored to us that the same varmint is occasionally seen flitting athwart the sky of mornings. *Oregon Weekly Times, October 2*

**Virginia fence:** a staggering drunk was said to make this (a zigzagging fence) when he walked. Anyone or anything that meanders. Any fence constructed in this manner.

1824: You pass no stone walls [in Virginia] but hedge, or in-and-out zig- zag cedar rails, or wattled fences. *Arthur Singleton, Letters from the South and West, p.59*

1826: The universal fence [in the West] is split rails, laid in a worm trail, or what is known in the North by the name of Virginia fence. *T. Flint, Recollections, p. 206*

1853: His acres were enclosed with harsh stone walls, or an unpicturesque Virginia fence, with its zig-zag of rude rails. *Life Scenes, p.99*

**wake snakes:** to raise a ruckus.

1848: This goin' ware glory waits ye hain't one agree'ble feetur. An ef it worn't for wakin' snakes, I'd come home again short meter. *Biglow Papers, No.2*

1852: Wake snakes, and come tojudgement- the times are big with the fate of nations. *Mr. Brown, Mississippi, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, March 30, p.359*

**want to know:** a New England expression equivalent to today's "Really? What else happened?"

1842: Among the peculiar expressions in use in Maine we noticed that, when a person has communicated some intelligence in which the hearer feels an interest, he manifests it by saying "I want to know"; and when he has concluded his narrative, the hearer will reply "O! do tell!" *J.S. Buckingham, Eastern and Western States, p.177*

1853: Jedediah Homespun up and spent a quarter to see the Siamese Twins (Eng and Chang). "How long you fellows been in this 'ere hitch?" "Forty-two years," was Eng's reply. "Du tell! Gettin' kind o' used to it, I calculate, ain't you?" "We ought to," said they. "Want to know! wall, I swar you air hitched queer. *Weekly Oregonian, September 3*

**whip:** to defeat or beat an opponent.

1815: If the enemy attack us in our present position, we must whip five to one. *Massachusetts Spy, February 8*

1838: Three hundred Indian warriors have thought proper to whip, on our soil, two companies of militia. *Jeffersonian, Albany, June 23*

1852: I felt as though I could whip all the mobs in Missouri. *Ezra T. Benson, at the Mormon Tabernacle, Journal of Discourses, August 28, vi, p.263*

**whip one's weight In wild cats:** to defeat a powerful opponent.

1829: Every man who could whip his weight in wild cats burned with desire of reaping renown by an encounter with Francisco. *Massachusetts Spy, February 11*

1841: That confidence of a western man, which induces him to believe that he can whip his weight in wild cats, is no vain boast. *A Week in Wall Street, p.46*

**whitewash:** to gloss over or hide one's faults or shortcomings.

1800: If you do not whitewash [President Adams] speedily, the Democrats, like swarms of flies, will bespatter him all over, and make you both as speckled as a dirty wall, and as black as the devil. *Aurora, Philadelphia, July 21*

1839: I am confident every effort will be used by the committee to white-wash the black frauds and corrupt iniquities of Swartwout, and to blackwash the Administration. *Mr. Duncan, Ohio, House of Reps., Congressional Globe, January 17, p. 103*

**wrathy:** angry.

1834: This kinder corner'd me, and made me a little wrathy. *Seba Smith, Major Jack Downing, p. 90*

1842: Oh! you're wrothy, an't ye? Why, I didn't mean nothing but what was civil. *Mrs. Kirkland, Forest Life, i, p.126*

1857: On Sunday morning, if breakfast is delayed, he is apt to be wrathy. *Thomas B. Gunn, New York Boarding Houses, p.34*

1888: Some grew hot and wrathy if laughed at, and that increased our fun. *Mrs. Elizabeth Custer, Tenting on the Plains, p.420*

**Yankee nations:** things made in New England, made widely known by traveling Yankee peddlers.

1825: The tallow, corn, cotton, hams, hides, and so forths, which we had got in exchange for a load of Yankee notions. *John Neal, Brother Jonathan, ii, p.298*

1826: Pit-coal indigo, wooden nutmegs, straw baskets, and Yankee notions. *T. Flint, Recollections, p.33*

1828: People abroad have no idea of what is meant here by Yankee notions, and are liable therefore to mistake our wooden ware for intellectual ware. *Yankee, Portland, Maine, January 1*

1843: Occasionally you will see some honest country Jonathan, with his wagon full of Yankee notions. *Yale Literary Magazine, ix, p.44*

1889: The camps were full of pedlers of Yankee notions, which soldiers are supposed to stand in need of. *John D. Billings, Hard Tack and Coffee, p.213*

## **APPALACHIAN SPEECH**

The speech of ordinary, down-home or uneducated folk of Appalachia, particularly that of the southern regions, as it evolved throughout the 1800s, with many terms or peculiar pronunciations still in use today.

**a body:** person, man or woman.

**acrost:** across.

**afeared:** afraid.

**afore:** before.

**agin:** against.

**aim:** intend.

**argie:** argue.

**backards:** backwards.

**bile:** boil.

**brung:** brought.  
**call:** reason.  
**chur:** chair.  
**didje:** did you.  
**drank:** drink.  
**druther:** I'd rather.  
**exter:** extra.  
**ezactly:** exactly.  
**fitten:** appropriate.  
**fixen:** intending.  
**govement:** government.  
**heerd:** heard.  
**hern:** hers.  
**hesh up:** hush up.  
**hisn:** his.  
**holler:** valley.  
**idee:** idea.  
**jist:** just.  
**keer:** care.  
**lasses:** molasses.  
**Law, Laws:** euphemism for Lord. nary: never.  
**nary:** never.  
**nigh:** near.  
**ourn:** ours.  
**pizen:** poison.  
**poke:** bag.  
**pone:** corn bread.  
**puny feelin':** sick.  
**richeer:** right here. shortsweetenin': sugar.  
**sich:** such.  
**spell:** for a time.  
**study on it:** think about it.  
**stump liquor:** corn liquor. tolable: tolerable/mediocre. tother: the other.  
**uppity:** snobbish.  
**vittles:** food.  
**whup:** whip.  
**widder:** widow.  
**yaller:** yellow.  
**yourn:** yours.

## **SWEAR WORDS, TABOO WORDS, EUPHEMISMS**

Although seldom found in print, swear words or taboo words were undoubtedly uttered just as profusely in the streets as they are now. In polite or mixed company, of course, euphemisms were used, especially by women and children. Many connotations of words used today remain curiously unchanged from the nineteenth century to the twentieth. In cases where no definition appears, the reader can use his or her imagination and extrapolate from current usage. Also note that some words that seem harmless today were considered highly vulgar not so long ago.

**adventuress:** euphemism for a prostitute or wild woman.

**ass, ass-backwards** (also **bass-ackwards**), **asswipe:** used throughout the century.

**balls:** shortened from ballocks, used throughout the century.

**bastard:** used throughout the century.

**bitch:** in the sense of a slutty, promiscuous Person (as a dog in heat) and actually applied to either sex early in the century. Its use to denote a crabby person, especially as applied to a female, came much later.

**blame:** euphemism for damn, used throughout the century and especially in New England.

1840s: I wasn't goin' to let Dean know; because he'd have thought him- self so blam'd cunning. Mrs. Claver's Western Clearings, *P. 70*

**blazes:** euphemism for hell or the devil.

**bloody,** British swear word, from mid-1700s on.

**boat-licker:** the equivalent of an ass-kisser.

**breast'** not used in mixed company. "Delicate" citizens went so far as to call a chicken breast a bosom.

**bull:** a taboo word due to its association with sexual potency. Polite folk spoke of a cow brute, a gentleman cow, a top cow, or a seed ox.

**bull:** in reference to lies or exaggerations, widely popularized by Civil War soldiers, from 1860s on.

**cherry:** vulgar term for a young woman, from at least mid-century on.

**clap:** for venereal disease, from the 1700s on.

**cockchafer, cocksucker, cockteaser:** all from at least mid-century on.

**condom:** taboo because contraceptives were illegal for most of the century.

**crap:** euphemism for shit, from at least mid-century.

**cunt:** highly vulgar, used throughout the century.

**cussed:** a somewhat acceptable swear word, meaning cursed, contemptible, mean, etc.

1840: Blast the cussed old imp! Knickerbocker Magazine, *xvi, p.323*

1841: Billy, Billy, you are a cussed fool! S. Lit. Messenger, *vii*

1869: I told Simpson I didn't want to go among a set of folks who were such cussed fools they couldn't speak English. *Barnum, Struggles and Triumphs, p.250*

1880: At another time she stopped them by planting herself directly on the track, out of pure cussedness. Harper's Magazine, *April*

1892: This is the cussedest business I was ever in. Harper's Magazine, *January, p.287*

**dad:** a euphemistic form of God, e.g., dad-blame it.

1834: I'll be dad shamed if it ain't all cowardice. Carmthen, Kentuckian I, *p.216*

1845: I'll tetch 'em together quicker'n lightnin,-if I don't, dad burn me! *W.T. Thompson, Chronicles of Pineville, p.182*

**damn:** a more powerful swear word in the nineteenth century than now. Acceptable euphemisms included blame, dang, darn, dern, ding, and others. Gol was sometimes used as a euphemistic prefix, e.g., the Goldered idiots.

**devil:** a more powerful expletive in the nineteenth century than now.

**dickens:** a euphemism for devil, e.g., What the dickens are you going on about now? Popularly used from the second half of the century.

**drafted:** a mild expletive, sometimes used as a euphemism for damned, throughout most of the century.

1840s: I was never so dratted mad; for the fellows were coming in in gangs, and beginnin' to call for me to come out and take the command. Major Jones's Courtship, *p.22*

**fart:** used throughout the century, e.g., I don't give a fart. Not worth a fart in a whirlwind.

**french pox:** euphemism for syphilis.

**fuck:** used throughout the century.

**bell:** euphemistically known as blazes, heck, Jesse, Sam Hill, thunder, and others.

**bell-fired:** euphemistically known as all-fired or joe-fired.

**horny:** sexually aroused. Used throughout the century.

**inexpressibles:** euphemism for pants or trousers. See Pants. (See also Clothing and Fashion, *p. 116.*)

**Jesse:** hell. To give one Jesse is to give one hell or to beat the hell out of him.

1845: He turned on the woman and gave her Jesse. *Cornelius Mathews, Writings, p.243*

1847: You've slashed the hide offer that feller in the lower town, touched his raw, and rumped his feathers, -that's the way to give him Jesse. *Robb, Streaks of Squatter Life, p.31*

**Jew:** to drive a hard bargain, from early in the century; used by Jew and non-Jew alike.

**jo-fired:** a variation of all-fired and hell-fired.

1834: It's jo-fired hard, though, I'll be hanged if it ain't. *Vermont Free Press, July 19*

**knock up:** to impregnate, from as early as 1813.

**leg:** considered a naughty term; limb was used as a polite substitute.

**lickfinger:** the equivalent of a kiss-ass, used throughout.

**lick-spittle:** same as lickfinger.

**limb:** used as a polite substitute for leg, which was considered naughty.

**Mary:** an effeminate homosexual, from the 1890s.

**Nancy, Nancy-boy:** an effeminate man, from 1800 on.

**necessary:** euphemism for the outhouse or water closet; the bathroom. *Used throughout the century.*

**Negro:** considered taboo because it had been used as a euphemism for a slave during the eighteenth century.

**oath:** any swearing involving the name of God or Jesus; any swear word.

1872: O, the cold-blooded oaths that rang from those young lips! *James McCabe, Lights and Shadows of New York Life, p.480*

**pants, trousers:** not spoken of aloud in polite circles, especially during the first half of the century. Acceptable alternatives: inexpressibles, unmentionables, nether garments, and sit-down-upons.

**piss, piss spot:** used throughout the century.

**piss proud:** a term for a false erection, i.e., one produced in the morning and not necessarily by sexual arousal. Used throughout the century.

**prick:** used throughout the century.

**puss, pussy:** dual meaning. Used widely as endearing appellations for women throughout the century, but also used in the vulgar sense (female genitalia) in some circles.

**quim:** female genitalia, used throughout the century.

**randy:** wanton or lecherous, from 1847 on.

**redneck:** a poor, white rural Southerner, from 1830 on.

**scalawag:** a mean, rotten or worthless person, from at least the 1840s.

**screw:** euphemism for sexual intercourse, used throughout the century. Also, to drive a hard bargain, used throughout the century.

**shit:** used throughout the century.

**snatch:** female genitalia, used throughout the century.

**snore, swan, swow:** Euphemisms used by New Englanders for the word swear, which was once itself considered a swear word. Used throughout the century.

1848: "Welll I swant" exclaimed the mamma, giving a round box on the ear to a dirty little urchin, "what made you let the little huzzy have your specs?" Mrs. Claver's Forest Life, *Vol. I., p.29*

1848: I took a turn round Halifax, and I swan if it ain't the thunderinest, drearyist place I ever seen and the people they call blue-noses. *Letter from Hiram Bigelow in Family Companion*

**sodomite:** homosexual, used throughout the century.

**Son of a bitch:** a very popular epithet throughout the American West from mid-century on.

**Strumpet:** a whore, used throughout the century.

**tarnal:** a Yankee swear word, from the 1700s on.

1825: I know your tarnal rigs inside and out, says I. *John Neal, Brother Jonathan, i, p. 158*

1848: The ship drifted on tew a korril reef, and rubbed a tarnal big hole in her plankin. *W.E. Burton, Waggeries, p. 17*

**tarnation, nation:** euphemisms for damnation, widely used throughout the century.

1801: The Americans say, Tarnation seize me, or swamp me, if I don't do this or that. *Colonel G. Haner, Life, ii, p.151*

1824: General Key is a tarnation sly old fox, for one that looks so dull. *Microscope, Albany, April 3*

1827: [The Militia system] by burning a nation sight of powder, makes way with a good deal of villainous saltpetre. *Massachusetts Spy, October 31*

1843: You've got this child into a tarnation scrape this time. *Knickerbocker Magazine, August*

1847: [He remarked to me that it was] all-nation hot inside the clap- boards. *Knickerbocker Magazine, July*

**twat:** female genitalia, used throughout the century.

**whoremonger:** not a pimp, but one who patronized prostitutes frequently.